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Z A I D E E

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A Romance

BY

MARGARET OLIPHANT

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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Z A I D E E

BOOK II.

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BOOK II.—CHAPTER I.

BEDFORD PLACE.

IN the front drawing-room are a group of ladies, some of them shawled and furred to the orthodox necessities of a London winter; some of them in careful morning-dress, expectant of visitors. The room is moderately well-sized, with three tall windows, draped in drab-coloured damask, with shadowy white curtains within. Before one window is a broad low “squab;” before another a little table bearing a vase of coloured glass, and a bouquet of Covent Garden flowers. Everything here savours of “town,” and you could no more imagine these camellias and geraniums arranged by other hands than those of the professional bouquet-makers, than you could fancy Mrs Disbrowe’s drawing-room table with its many ornaments, or her chandelier and

chimney-glass, to be home work. On a small chif-
fonier at one side of the room, dimly sparkling with
its plate-glass back, and reflecting the moving figures
before it, stands another vase of flowers something
worse for the wear ; and a profusion of bits of “ fancy
work,” scattered over the room, declare the presence
of young maidenhood in this very comfortable, but not
very bright apartment, where all the chairs are drab,
and where everything is made the most of, from the
pretty embroidered cushion which embellishes a dim
sofa, to the little ornamental foot-mat which hides a
hole in the carpet. The folding-doors are open which
divide the front from the back drawing-room, and in
the doorway stands a settee, very odd and very easy,
with tufts of green trimming on its drab cushions,
behind which you can see the light entering through
the back window, and a distant perspective of curtains
and ottomans—still drab, like the rest of the apart-
ment—but nothing more.

A comely middle-aged woman, with a wrinkle of
care in her brow, is Mrs Disbrowe, seated in her arm-
chair,—the ample folds of her black satin gown sweep
the carpet round her, and her pretty morning-cap of
lace and pink ribbon brightens up her quarter of the
room like a gay picture. If Mrs Disbrowe has a
weakness for anything, it is this same pink ribbon,
which gives freshness and colour to her habiliments :

for the rest, Mrs Disbrowe's brooch is twenty years old ; and we dare not say how many winters have passed over her well-preserved lace, and thrifty black satin gown. At this very moment these active hands of hers, which look in very pretty condition in spite of their many industries, are busy with some delicate mending ; and there is not a personal extravagance about this frugal manager, save the bit of pink ribbon which throws a soft colour upon her comely cheek.

Her daughter Charlotte, a tall, well-grown, well-looking girl, with a great deal of "way" upon her, stands before the fireplace, swinging some flowing breadths of muslin over her arm and in her hands. To know that Charlotte Disbrowe has a great many little brothers and sisters, and in her day has had a good deal to do for them, you only need to look at her. A frankness of good-humour and careless ease of expression, which some people call boldness, added to a rapid sweeping way she has of doing everything, give her something of a hoydenish appearance. But Charlotte never was shy, and does not know what it is to be embarrassed,—a certain steady open freedom about her, makes her always self-possessed and at her ease. She has never been afraid of her own voice all her life, nor hesitated to laugh or to cry when the impulse was upon her ; and though her careless ease of manner

may now and then jar unpleasantly on sensitive feelings, the good-humoured girl never means to wound any one, and would prefer doing a good turn to a bad one any day. But this young lady carries her scorn of sentiment rather farther than is quite consistent with tenderness of heart. A breezy lightsome summer morning, fresh and gay, is Miss Disbrowe's youth ; but there is no dew for the sun to glimmer in ; the earth is dry about her, and wants the genial softness of spring showers.

The visitors are young ladies of Miss Disbrowe's own standing, and a mamma not quite so comely as the mistress of this house. These young people are all well-looking girls, fashionable, up to the mark of Bedford Place, easy and careless, and a little loud, with unexceptionable gloves, and floating ribbons, and fresh unsullied dress, eager in their talk, rapturous in their commendations, extravagant in their dislike, yet good girls in their way, if you make due allowance for the total want of veneration for any thing or any person, which is part of their character. You think, perhaps, this rattle of talk would be hushed or subdued if a few older people, less indulgent than these good mammas, were present to hear : not so—the youngest among them would flirt with her friend's grandfather, could the good old gentleman be introduced here, and makes no more account of her own

mother's presence, or the respect due to it, than if the said mother were but a newly emancipated school-girl like herself.

A couch at the farther window is strewn with bridal finery, the pretty necessities of the *trousseau*. Though she is the bride, Charlotte is as easy and unconcerned in her blushing honours as that little sister from the nursery, who peers about, pulling these pretty robes by the corner, and examining with a child's curiosity. Charlotte stands swinging the muslin for her new dressing-gown over her arm, and speaking in a tolerably high-pitched voice over the head of little Marian Maurice, to Helen Maurice at the other end of the room. The mammas make their conversation more quietly, seated together, but this is what Miss Disbrowe says—

“ Yes, Edward sadly wants to have it over. All this fuss and trouble puts him out, he says. *I* don't mind it,—but then one can't delay for ever, and now that mamma is settled with a governess, it may as well be now as at another time.”

“ Oh, are you settled with a governess? Who is it, Charlotte?” cried the intermediate sister of the three Misses Maurice.

“ Well, it's—I declare I can't tell,” broke off Charlotte, abruptly and with a laugh. “ It's a girl—but it's not exactly what you could call ‘ a young person’

either, and I can't make it out at all. What did you say, mamma?"

" You had better send Minnie out of the room before you say any more about the new governess," said Mrs Disbrowe.

" Why?" said Charlotte, opening her blue eyes wider; " I am not afraid of Minnie telling, and I don't mean to say any ill of her besides. And I don't know any ill either," continued the young lady more quietly; " she looks very odd, and she's not at all handsome—I think that's quite right and proper; but the strange thing is, that she's only a child."

" Oh, I remember, we had once a very young governess," said Helen Maurice, pinching a lace trimming after a fashion which the bride by no means approved, " and I never saw any one so eager to have us learn, either at home or at school. You recollect Miss Ashley, Jane?"

" Yes—we never minded her," said Jane laconically.

" I daresay Minnie and the rest will not mind this one either," said Helen, composedly picking at the braid of Charlotte's future travelling-dress. " If I should have a hundred children, I should never have them taught at home."

" I wish mamma would send me to school," said Minnie. " Charlotte had masters for everything, and

I wonder why I should only have a governess—fancy me minding Miss Francis ! I am sure she is afraid of me.”

This redoubtable young lady was eleven years old, and the next eldest girl of the family.

“ Well, never mind the governess. Are you sure to be married on Tuesday, Charlotte ?” asked Marian Maurice. “ You will not change your mind ?”

“ No—I suppose so,” said the bride, stooping her head a little, and vacantly counting the folds of her muslin. “ But,” continued Charlotte, in the same breath, disposing summarily of this momentary shade of bashfulness, “ you never told me—are you all to be dressed alike ?”

“ Well, Helen has pink ribbons, and I have blue, and Marian will have nothing but white roses,” said Jane Maurice ; “ but we are all the same except that. How silly to ask Charlotte ! as if you had not seen what we were to wear.”

“ Bridesmaids do not require to be dressed alike,” said Helen. “ I am sure at Fanny Allen’s wedding there were all the colours of the rainbow. Charlotte, come and try this bonnet on. Isn’t it pretty ? When I am married, I shall have mine made just so.”

“ When I am married, I shall have mine in the fashion,” said the promising Minnie. “ You will all be old women then, whatever you do.”

Incautiously coming within range of her sister's hand as she spoke, Minnie was fitly rewarded by a smart stroke, which reddened her white shoulders under her pinafore, but elicited nothing more than a little cry of defiance. This was Charlotte's mode of keeping discipline in her late dominions.

"If *I* was your mamma," said Helen Maurice, whose peradventures were all in this vein, "I should certainly send you to school."

"Then I wish you were my mamma!" cried Minnie. "Miss Francis! why, little Lucy Moore is as old as she is. I will never get my lessons to her; she is not much bigger than me!"

"Where does she come from, then, or how did Mrs Disbrowe hear of her, Charlotte?" asked Marian Maurice.

"It was Angelina Roberts, who was at school with us, you remember, Helen," said Charlotte: "she married a curate in the country, and I wrote to her—I might have known she was always silly—so she sent us this little girl."

"How provoking! But can't you send her back again?" said Jane.

"I would never trust *my* children with a person who had no experience," said Helen Maurice with dignity.

"I am sure, if I were you, I should wait till I

had some," said Charlotte, worn out of patience with her friend's careless fingers, which continued assiduously to pick at the braid of her dress, and drawing herself up with the superior importance belonging to herself, almost a married lady. "Mamma ought to know what she requires, and she thinks this little girl will do."

Just then Marian Maurice put her arms round Charlotte, and her own sister Jane, and drew them nearer to the sofa with its load of pretty things. "Don't speak so loud," said this girl, who was gentler-hearted than her companions. "I see some one in the back drawing-room—a strange dark girl: is not that Miss Francis? Charlotte, dear, don't let her hear us speak of her; it is not her fault if she is so young!"

And there were so many delightful collars and capes and handkerchiefs, so many mysterious under-garments, invisible to profane eyes at ordinary seasons, but exhibited in all their delicate workmanship at this, to examine and commend; and Helen had to repeat so often that this and that were the very things she should have "when she was married," and Jane had so many improvements to suggest, and Marian so many comments to make, that it was not difficult to forget the new governess. Meanwhile, a pair of dark eyes glanced upon this group from behind the

drab settee with its green trimmings—tearless shining eyes, moved with neither grief nor anger, and only keenly observant, because it was their nature so to be. These eyes made no envious criticism, and neither sympathised nor condemned ; but simply, out of their own different sphere, and far-away abstracted existence, looked forth, and looked on.

CHAPTER II.

MRS DISBROWE.

IT is not to be supposed that Mrs Disbrowe is by any means an incompetent person, or an over-indulgent mother, by the *prima facie* evidence of her daughter's independent manners. Just such a young lady as Charlotte was "Mamma" herself in her day, and softened and modified as she has become in her matronhood, she has yet no fault to find with the bearing of her eldest hope. But uncontrolled as Charlotte seems, the reins of this household are in a firm and unhesitating hand. There is no sort of devotion to each other between this mother and daughter. Mrs Disbrowe is comparatively young herself, and has far too many personal objects in life to identify herself overmuch with her daughter; while Charlotte on her part sets up an unequivocal equality, and is not aware that she owes respect which is not looked for at her hands. With this easy amount of affection and indifference, they make a very good

mother and daughter after their fashion ; and the eyes of neither being much enlightened by the clear-sightedness of love, Mrs Disbrowe finds no fault with Charlotte, and Charlotte is very well contented with “ mamma.”

It is Mr Disbrowe’s profession to be a lawyer, and it is Mrs Disbrowe’s profession to be Mr Disbrowe’s wife. To this business she has been trained, and she discharges its duties most conscientiously. Also, this lady is too sensible not to be kind-hearted in a measure : her servants are not oppressed, and her poor little nursery-governess, putting feelings out of the question, has no great cause to tremble. Mrs Disbrowe’s temper is moderately equable ; her judgment is tolerably trustworthy — she would be shocked to find her daughter’s room in extreme disorder, or her dress less handsome than her companions’. Charlotte’s mind, however, is her own affair — her mother does not find it necessary to take any supervision of that ; but, notwithstanding, Mrs Disbrowe is a good mother, a good wife, the respectable mistress of a most respectable household. Thrift and economy are the Lares and Penates of Bedford Place. Mrs Disbrowe would rather be guilty of a small sin than be thought poor ; but she would rather be thought poor than extravagant. True, she can be liberal with a good grace when occasion is,

and even profuse when there is any end to be served by it, and is never mean nor parsimonious at any time ; but in her heart of hearts Mrs Disbrowe is thrifty, and not only needs but loves all frugal arts.

“ What is the use of speaking so much of Miss Francis ?” said Mrs Disbrowe, when her visitors were gone. “ I daresay she is not so young after all ; so many people look younger than they really are ;—I did, myself, before I was married.”

“ I suppose you must have been grown up when you were married, mamma,” said Charlotte. “ Such an idea !—it is not that she looks young—she looks a mere child !”

“ Nevertheless, young ladies, I intend to try her,” said the mother decisively. “ You need not think I shall bear any nonsense, Minnie ; however, Miss Francis is not *your* governess, she is only for the nursery. If she is a mere child, it is that foolish friend of yours, Charlotte, who is to blame. It is extremely provoking when one thinks of it—why did she undertake your commission at all ?”

“ So you *are* annoyed, mamma, after all !” exclaimed Charlotte. “ I will not say a word now—only, why don’t you send her home again ?”

“ Lottie,” said the worldly mother, melting into the kindly woman, “ it is not so sure that she has a home, poor little orphan child : I should not wonder

if her aunt ill-treated her ; at all events, I know she would rather starve than go back—she told me so. Ask Angelina who her aunt is, by the way, the next time you write ; and this little girl is very modest and quiet, and I am pleased she does not undertake a great deal, and she wants no salary. She will be no expense to us, and no trouble. Yes, I shall give Miss Francis a fair trial.”

“ I wonder what is her Christian name,” said Charlotte ; “ it looks so odd to call a child like this, Miss.”

“ There’s a Z on her handkerchiefs,” said Minnie—“ such a pretty one, worked in gold thread, with a little wreath round it ; and when I asked her if she could do that, she said ‘ No,’ and turned away her head, and I think she was near crying. You don’t think she looks like a Jewess, do you, mamma ? for I can’t remember any name that begins with Z but Zillah, and that is a Jewish name.”

“ I think she told me her name was Elizabeth,” said Mrs Disbrowe ; “ but you shall call her Miss Francis, Minnie,—do you hear ? so it does not matter much to you what she is called at home. What are you going to do with that muslin, Charlotte ?—you have only till Saturday, recollect ; I expect everything to be ready then ; and your dress will not make itself, you may be certain.”

"Well, *I* can't do it, mamma," said Charlotte, pouting; "there is always something to look after—one can't be in fifty places at the same time—and I want it so much too. Poor me, all my things are so useful! I have not a pretty morning-dress to come to breakfast in, and Edward likes me in pink—he told me so."

"Pink muslin looks pretty in November," said Mrs Disbrowe; "never mind, it must be made, I suppose. There, now, it is past time for visitors. Get all your things away before papa comes home. Quick—Minnie will help you: Mr Disbrowe thinks I am very foolish to indulge you so."

"And I think it's the greatest comfort in life," muttered Charlotte, with momentary ill-humour, as she carried an armful of her pretty dresses to her own room, "that I don't need to care what papa thinks after a week is over. Well, to think after Tuesday I shall never need to consult any one, never ask anybody's permission, always do what *I* like myself—Minnie, don't you think it's delightful!"

"I daresay!" cried Miss Minnie, ironically; "Edward will make you do what *he* likes. Oh, I am sure you need not expect to have your own way as you had at home."

"If he thinks I shall do as he likes, he is mistaken," said Charlotte, reddening; "oh no, one doesn't get

married for that. Be quiet, Minnie, I'll tell mamma of you. I saw Helen Maurice picking the braid off my dress, and you want to finish it, I think."

"I wish Helen Maurice may never get married," said the malicious Minnie; "how she does talk of it! Oh, listen, Charlotte; here's mamma."

But mamma passed by without entering, and happily closed the door upon herself in her own room.

In mamma's sensible mind a little controversy was waging. She was more annoyed than she chose to confess with the youthfulness of the newly-arrived governess. "People will think I cannot afford a better," said this prudent mother; but womanly pity and interest in the stranger had a strong ally and advocate in the leading principle of Mrs Disbrowe's life. "I do not doubt in the least she will be very careful with the children, and then so cheap! She will cost us nothing," was the more important observation which succeeded. "Of course, I will keep her in the nursery; and she is well-mannered, and looks something like a lady, though she is odd and old-fashioned. People will think she is some poor relation of our own, and I don't care if it should be said so. Yes, I will keep Miss Francis."

Mrs Disbrowe turned to her toilette. Her evening dress was quite as thrifty and well preserved as her morning one; and Charlotte's gloves and flowers cost

as much in the year as her economical mamma's most expensive gowns. But this was from no foolish fondness or indulgence. The family ruler did nothing more than was necessary. The credit and "standing" of the house of Disbrowe were quite as much at stake in Charlotte's ribbons as in the elder lady's more ample drapery—the one could preserve and be taken care of, the other could not; and Mrs Disbrowe, wise in her generation, knew when to gather in, and when to scatter abroad.

The house was a tall London house—storey above storey, stair on stair—in which the "family" properly so called—to wit, the full-grown members and heads of the same, the visitors and friends of the house, all the people in it able to behave with due decorum—were interposed between the perpetual talk of the kitchens and the far-off storm of the nursery. Composed and placid weather—the meridian of commonplace good behaviour—was in the dining-parlour and drawing-rooms; but below, cook and housemaid and Buttons "sat upon" Bedford Place in general—a committee of public safety, great in the doings of number three and number seven; while above, a continual rattle of small musketry, with a great cannon booming now and then through the din, gave note of the infantine battalions, and of Nurse, their general-in-chief, who was either siding against one detachment

in favour of another, or combating the whole refractory population with the energy and despair of a martyr. Mrs Disbrowe, standing steadily before her mirror, hears echoes of all the various noises above and below, of a small skirmish between Charlotte and Minnie next door, and a tumultuous charge of all the infantry upon the devoted representative of maternal rule up-stairs. "No one knows the care of a family," said Mrs Disbrowe's reverie; but she set her cap without disturbance, arranged her pink ribbon, and adjusted her stomacher. All very well for people to disturb themselves who are new to these experiences. Mrs Disbrowe felt the reins in her hand, and did not care to dangle them always in the eyes of her unruly vassals; so mamma went down stairs again with her prompt air and active step, unwrinkled save for that one fold of care in her comely forehead — an embodiment of calm authority — a constitutional monarch, governing everybody according to her own will and pleasure, for the benefit of the house of Disbrowe, for the good preservation of credit and respectability, and the general welfare of the family. Mamma, with the eye of a statesman, looked to the main realities of government, and let the little riots wear themselves out.

CHAPTER III.

THE NURSERY.

THE nursery is a large, light, somewhat low apartment under the roof, with two dumpy windows, and a little room containing the third, partitioned off at one side. In the clear light of this early winter day you see the bright woollen shawl and printed gown of Nurse, the irresponsible ruler of this lofty domain, full in the sunshine, as she turns her back to the window, and, resting her feet upon the fender, cosily enjoys the fire and her knitting. Nurse's gown is of a very gay pattern, and her shawl is of a brilliant check, lighter than ever Celtic fancy devised for everyday wear ; from which tokens you may understand that Nurse's disposition inclines towards the brightnesses of life, and that there is nothing sour or uncongenial in this good-humoured potentate. A twinkle of that merry black eye of hers, and an exclamation from her lips, put you in possession of another fact — to wit, that Nurse is Irish, with brogue enough to corrupt the

English of half-a-dozen nurseries. As it happens, Mrs Disbrowe has few apprehensions on this score, and knows better than to lose a trustworthy and not expensive servant for the sake of her speech ; so this Connaught woman has ruled above stairs in peace and in tumult for ten years, and all the little Disbrowes, of consequence, are learned in this kindly brogue of hers, which is “the Irish language” to them.

In the centre of the square of carpet which covers the middle of the room, sits a little girl, with long strings of ringlets hanging round her head in a shower, and veiled entirely in a great pinafore, which reaches from her neck to her ankles. The laudable occupation of this young lady is the demolishing of one of her newest toys — a barking dog, or rather a dog which will bark no more, as its pedestal has already been broken open, in a vain investigation for the origin of the sound. Sissy is a little girl of an inquiring mind, and can never be content with a result till she has searched out the cause.

Lying at Nurse’s feet, sharing with a favourite kitten the ample skirt of her gown, and, unseen by Nurse, the clue of coloured lambs’-wool from which she knits her stocking, is a still younger Disbrowe than Sissy. Master Tom has an eye for mischief, and a rosy little face, glowing and merry, brightened all day long by universal favour and encouragement.

However squally the weather may be, above stairs or below, to others of the household, Tommy is the happy one upon whom nobody ever glooms. Not mamma, when the little rogue drags her freshest ribbon — not Charlotte, when he pins her dress to her chair, as he did yesterday — not Nurse herself, did she look down and see what his rosy little fingers are busy with now. So, with happy fearlessness, Master Tom unwinds the worsted, and ravelles it round his kitten's velvet paws. Pussie does not like it very much, and would scratch were the operator any but he ; but even pussie owns the fascination of merry little Tommy Disbrowe, the pet and plaything of the house.

Sitting apart with dignified composure at a window, with a long strip of muslin between them, two little girls, exactly the same height, do their task of hemming with varying industry, very busy one while, and extremely idle another. The light comes in brightly over these two small heads, with their thick clustering curls of dark hair, short and crisp and childlike — heads which seem perfect counterparts each of the other ; and a most animated conversation, carried on under their breath, proceeds with less intermission than the task. The twins of the household are seven years old, mature and matronly, and a little prudish. Mamma does not stand one-half so much on her pro-

priety as do Rosie and Lettie, these two small sisters, whom it will be prudent to call Rosa and Letitia, if you would propitiate their favour. These young ladies are heartily tired of hemming frills for Charlotte ; yard upon yard has passed over their poor little pricked forefingers, and but for a strong sense of duty, Rosie and Lettie must have mutinied long ago. So the hemming goes on languidly, while the conversation rises apace out of whispers into subdued talk, and soon into talk which forgets to be subdued ; so that even these little examples of childish dignity add something to the din of sound which fills this well-populated apartment every hour of the day.

For Harry, five years old, spins a humming top on the other side of Sissy ; and Jack, eight and a half, in profound and abstracted silence, works away with a knife at a bit of wood, hoping to whittle a boat out of it by-and-by. Jack is very much too seriously occupied for speech, but Sissy's merry voice runs on in a continual current while she demolishes her toy. Tommy maintains a lively dialogue with his kitten. Harry apostrophises his top, and Rosie and Lettie, at length forgetful of auditors, carry on *their* running conversation now with perfect unrestraint,—add to all this the adjuration of Nurse to one and another, the kindly grumble and pathetic appeal with which she keeps up her supervision of this noisy common-

wealth, and you may fancy how many agreeable varieties of sound blend in the distant hum of the nursery, and how prudent it is of Mrs Disbrowe to close her ears as she goes down the stair.

“Oh, Lettie, don’t you wish our Charlotte was married !” says, with a profound sigh, the little Rose.

“We always have to be doing something,” answers her more philosophical sister. “To be sure, hemming is so dull ; but mamma says Minnie is thoughtless, and all the rest are children—there are only *us*, Rosie, to help mamma.”

Somewhat comforted by this view of the subject, Rosie resumed the needle which had been resting in the interval. “Minnie is idle,” said the little monitor ; “Minnie ought to be as thoughtful as *us*.”

The admirable dignity with which this *us* was emphasized was edifying to behold.

“Sissy, to be sure, is quite a baby,” continued Rosie, with lofty kindness, “but I don’t think when she grows up she will be more thoughtful than Minnie—and boys are always useless. Oh, Lettie, what we shall have to do !”

Lettie shook her head solemnly, and under the influence of this mutual condolence the hemming proceeded with steadiness for a full minute. Then the hands of the more volatile Rose once more dropped upon her knees.

“ We never shall go to school now,” said Rosie. “ Do you think you shall like Miss Francis, Lettie ? I do.”

“ How can you tell, when we never saw her till Saturday ? ” said the prudent sister. “ I don’t know till we begin school, but I don’t think she can teach us like Charlotte : she might do for Sissy and Harry, and little Tom, but we are not such children now.”

“ No ”—Rosie assented at once to this self-evident proposition—“ but I should like to like Miss Francis, Lettie,” said the little woman, who was soft of heart, “ for she looks so sad.”

“ I like Miss Francis,” cried Sissy loudly. “ I like Miss Francis, and I will learn my lessons and be good, and so will Tommy ; for, Nurse, Miss Francis did not go to Minnie, or to Lettie, but she came to Tommy and me.”

“ It is because she does not know, if she likes the little ones best,” said the wise and sedate Letitia.

“ Sure, she’ll like you all, every one, if you’re good,” said Nurse, the pacifier : “ she’s no better than a child herself, poor soul ! but she’s a woman to the likes of you. Ah, Master Tommy, my darlin’, reason good she should take to you ! ”

“ Nurse can’t see what Tommy’s doing,” said Harry. “ Who says I’ll learn my lessons to Miss

Francis? I won't be taught by a woman! I'll go to school like other boys."

"Oh, Master Tommy, is that the way you're sarvin' your poor nurse?" cried the afflicted empress of the nursery, pathetically, "and me puttin' the *trust* in you and all! Sure and you wouldn't be a wicked boy—and your own little socks, darlin'—and pussie would be as glad of a bit of cord any day; give the pet your little dog, Miss Sissy,—you wouldn't refuse him, dear?"

But Sissy, as it happened, did refuse him, not having quite come to a decision herself respecting the origin of the bark, now ceased for ever. "My doggie won't bark any more," said Sissy mournfully; "I'll not give him to Tommy. I'll put him away with my doll. Oh, Nurse, how did it go away?"

"What, darlin'?" Nurse bent down from her seat to gather up her ravelled worsted, and to listen to the little applicant.

"The bark—the bark!" cried Sissy; "I only made a hole here, and here—look, Nurse—and my doggie will not bark whatever I do. I can't see where it came from either, but he won't bark any more."

"He's kilt," said Nurse solemnly, "that's what it is, and it's all along of you, Miss Sissy. What would come of you, child, if some one would be making holes to see how your voice came? Never mind, Tommy

love ; and you, Master Henry, keep your whip away. I'll not have you frighten the darlin' child."

"I don't care !" cried Tommy valiantly ; "I can lick him though he's big, and Sissy too—come on !"

But Master Tommy's rosy fists were locked fast in Nurse's hands. "The spirit of him !" cried that admiring guardian of the public peace ; "but you're all to be good—now you hear me—husht every one of you, and I'll tell you a tale."

This bribe produced an immediate lull in the din ; and even Jack paused in his weighty occupation to listen to Nurse, famed as a story-teller beyond all praise.

"There was onced two little boys, and they lived in a grand castle, and had lords and ladies serving of them night and day," said the veracious romancer, "and never ate their bread and milk out of less nor a golden porringer, and had the beautifullest fruit in their garden that ever grew, and rode upon ponies as white as milk, and wore silks and satins, and were the grandest in the land. Well an' you see there came a poor man to this great castle, all for to teach learning to the two little boys ; and one said, 'I'll learn sure of any one, for learning's good ;' and another said, 'He's only for the little children ; he shan't never teach me.' So the one went to his plays and diversion, and the other to his learning and his books. There were great lords to ride and play with the one, and nothing

but this poor man for to teach the other ; and time went on, and time went on, till the two little boys grew up to be men.

“ Now, husht, every one of you, and hearken to me. One of them came to be a great king, with all the country under his hand ; and the other wandered here and there, and had neither a house nor a rood of land, and many a day little enough to put in his mouth for the hunger. Now, you, Master Harry, tell me which was the king, and which was the wandering boy ? ”

Master Harry fell back behind little Sissy, and gloomed at the story-teller, and made no answer. “ I know ! ” cried Sissy triumphantly ; “ the good boy that learned his lessons was the king. Oh, I know—and I’ll be so good, Nurse, when Miss Francis comes to me.”

“ Is it true, Nurse — is it true ? ” cried Rosie, eagerly.

“ What should hinder it to be true, Miss Rosie, dear ? ” said Nurse, with the air of an oracle ; and as she wound up her ravelled thread, the gracious nurse vouchsafed another tale. It does not answer to award anything but the truest poetic justice when your audience are children. Nurse knew no other lore than that simplest sort which makes the good boy “ live happy and die happy,” and thus she invariably distributed her imaginary fate.

CHAPTER IV.

A FAMILY PARTY.

MRS DISBROWE's drawing-room, where the fire burns brightly, and the lamp is lit upon the family table, is by no means an uncheerful apartment, spite of those trimmings of drab and green, which cannot choose but look faded. The chandelier, solemnly erecting its seven white candles, unlighted, yet ready to be lit ; and the broad mirror on the mantel-shelf, in which this chandelier surveys itself, scatter the light pleasantly through the apartment, which is, moreover, brightened up with many animated faces, as the family, in social kindness, take together their family cup of tea. Little Tommy Disbrowe, the central figure of the scene, lies stretched at his full length upon the soft warm hearth-rug, played with by all and sundry his seniors who surround him ; while studious Jack eats cake with devotion by his mother's side, and Rosie and Lettie hold a synod at the corner of the fireplace. That good-looking youth on the sofa

holding Sissy on his knee is Mrs Disbrowe's eldest son, the heir and hope of the house, who is nineteen, and wavers considerably between the gent and the gentleman. Leo is in his father's office, learning his father's profession, but not greatly improved by the society of other youths, like himself, in the same dusty *academia*. Mr Disbrowe once upon a time was engaged in some business of the hapless Princess Charlotte's, and so it comes that his eldest daughter bears her name, and that his eldest son is Leopold, though the royal godfather—if ever he thought of it at all—has long ago forgotten his name-son. To tell the truth, Mr Disbrowe himself has little memory now for the connection, and has even forgotten to be reminded of it by Leopold's Teutonic name.

A young man of five or six and twenty, tall, ruddy, and fair-haired, a well-looking and good-humoured Saxon, sits by Charlotte's side, as she presides at the tea-table. You must not suppose that the young lady blushes, or is at all discomposed by the near vicinity of her bridegroom, or the close approach of her marriage-day ; but this is Edward Lancaster, Miss Disbrowe's betrothed. The bridegroom is much at his ease, and completely at home in the family ; and he must be a good fellow, you perceive, for not papa's own indulgent hand is grasped with more eagerness by this happy little Tom ; and Rosie and Lettie them-

selves unbend, and are gracious to their new brother. The verdict of the children is entirely in favour of Edward.

Mr Disbrowe himself, the principal of all these personages, the head of the house, and origin of all its comfort—Mr Disbrowe is content to be comfortable in his arm-chair, occupying one clear side of the domestic hearth. Papa's chair is the most luxurious of all the chairs ; his slippers feet share the warm rug with Tommy ; and in this time of family privacy he rejoices in the ease of a dressing-gown, and, closing his eyes, takes in the kindly warmth of the fire-side, and the voices of his children, into his heart. More than this Mr Disbrowe never pretends to do ; he is a very trustworthy adviser in his office, but a most indolent monarch at home. “Mamma,” the household autocrat, is as universally referred to by her husband as by the smallest denizen of the nursery. Papa comes home to be comfortable and enjoy himself ; he is not to be troubled by anything that savours of business : business is for the office, enjoyment for home ; so the arm-chair is wheeled every night into its roomy corner, the lion's share of the fireplace ; and the room looks bright in papa's eyes, and he sees this circle of smiling faces, and steps into his slippers on these cold nights with the purest sense of luxury ; while mamma, instead of grumbling to fill her throne alone, approves

with quiet satisfaction, and thinks Mr Disbrowe a very sensible man.

“Who do you think were here to-day?—all the Maurices, Leo,” said Minnie, who, in a sudden fit of industry, sits with a book of hieroglyphics before her, looping a quantity of thread into a mysterious spider’s net, and not to be disturbed even by the bustle of tea—“Helen, and Jane, and Marian, talking,—oh, you should have heard them!”

“Should I?” said Leo, carelessly; “would that have been for their benefit or mine?”

“Oh, Charley will tell you. Every word Helen Maurice said was what she should do when she was married,” said the malicious Minnie. “I wish some of you boys had been there to laugh at her—indeed I do!”

“Who are ‘you boys,’ pray?” said Leo: “as for the Maurices, I’d rather have the little one, though there’s none of them worth looking twice at. Here, Sissy, open your mouth, and shut your eyes. I say, little one, what will you do when you’re married?”

“I’ll make Edward buy me a pretty pony,” said Sissy promptly, “and ride all round every day.”

“Round where, Pussie? and what will Edward have to do with it?” asked the elder brother.

“That is always what Charlotte says,” said the free-spoken Sissy.

Charlotte put up her hand hurriedly to her small

sister's rosy mouth, but the words were spoken ; the bridegroom laughed with very gay good-humour, and not without a little pride, and the bride blushed as she had not blushed that night.

"Papa wants some tea," said Charlotte hurriedly. "I wish you children would be quiet : Leo, will you attend to papa?"

"You children, and you boys ! Upon my word, I am complimented," said boyish Leo, indignantly. "I say, Lancaster, isn't young Burtonshaw a friend of yours ? I saw him not long since, and he had his little cousin, Miss Cumberland, with him ; now that's a nice little girl."

"Mrs Cumberland is very silly ; I saw her once with mamma," said Minnie.

"How sad it would be for Mrs Cumberland to know what Minnie Disbrowe thought of her !" said Leo, while mamma interposed with an angry "hush !" — "but I said Miss Cumberland, Burtonshaw's little cousin, a pretty little thing with long curls like gold. I don't like your old misses—your Helen Maurices, who talk of being married ; a good little girl for me."

"Like Sissy, Leo !" said his little sister, holding up her pretty little face lovingly.

"Like Sissy !" said the youth, moved with simple affection ; "just like my little sister. I like Sissy best of all."

“ You may be sure Helen Maurice would never look at you,” said Charlotte, interposing in defence of her friend. “ Helen Maurice was a young lady when you had your first jacket—Oh, I recollect very well,” continued the bride, forgetting that she defended, in the greater pleasure of having a private thrust at her chosen companion, “ she left school a long while before I did ; Helen Maurice is quite an experienced person now.”

“ Don’t be ill-natured, Charlotte,” said Mrs Disbrowe ; “ she is a very good girl, and your friend, and has helped you a great deal with your things, you know. I wish she *was* married, for my part, as she speaks so much about it, for there are a great many of them at home.”

“ There are more of *us* !” cried Minnie. “ I will be Miss Disbrowe on Tuesday—I wonder if mamma will wish me married,—Rosie and Lettie, and Sissy, all younger than I am, and there are only three of the Maurices. Papa, do you think they will wish me away ?”

“ Ask your mother, my dear,” said Papa placidly. Papa, to tell the truth, was half asleep.

“ Minnie, be quiet,” said the authoritative Charlotte. “ Poor Miss Francis, I do pity her among you all.”

“ She is not my governess—mamma said so at least,” said Minnie ; “ you need not pity her for me.”

“Where is Miss Francis?” said Leo. “What do you do with her, mother?—is she never to be here?”

“She is with Nurse up-stairs—she asked mamma to let her stay,” said little Sissy. “She does not like you, you are so rude and noisy; she only cares for Tommy and me.”

“What a funny girl that is!—I wonder has she run away from anywhere,” said Leo, “she looked so frightened when you had her here.”

“Yes, Charlotte, I wish you would write for me, and inquire who her aunt is. We ought to know,” said Mrs Disbrowe, “though I daresay, poor thing, it was not for any fault she ran away; an aunt is not like a mother. I think they were not kind to her, poor child.”

Charlotte shrugged her shoulders impatiently. “I have a hundred things to do, and no time,” said the bride: “never mind her aunt, mamma, if she will suit you. Will some of you children ring the bell—more cake for Tommy? Is he to have it, papa?”

The invariable “ask your mother, my dear,” was on Mr Disbrowe’s lips; but recollecting that the applicant was Tommy, papa for once exerted himself, and with his own hand served the little favourite boy. Then the circle dispersed—the bride and bridegroom to the back drawing-room for a confidential talk; mamma to her work-table, and all its heap of labours;

the cadets of the family to the nursery, after a round of kisses and good-nights. Papa stretched himself still more comfortably in his easy-chair ; Leo yawned, and took a book ; Minnie pored over her hieroglyphics : the pleasant hour of family intercourse was over for to-night.

CHAPTER V.

MISS FRANCIS.

THE fire in the nursery, small but bright, is sedulously guarded by its high green fender ; the light which burns on Nurse's round table is one sorry candle, and no more, in the full illumination of which stands her tea equipage—her white cups and saucers, and black teapot. In ordinary cases, it is a very solitary meal to Nurse, and she is not greatly the better in respect to sociability with the companion she has now.

Far different from yon ruddy happy kindly drawing-room in the Grange, with all its flush of home comfort and family associations, is this dim apartment in the highest storey of Mrs Disbrowe's house in Bedford Place ; far different from the Lady of Briarford, the fairy godmother of Zaidee Vivian's fancy, is homely Irish Nurse, in her bright printed gown and woollen shawl ; but to Zaidee Vivian, at this moment, external circumstances weigh little, keenly conscious though she is of the stranger voices sounding from below, and of the unfamiliar walls that surround her. Everything

is strange, cold, unknown. An unseen spiritual existence, walking this world among men whose mortal faculties were unconscious of its presence, could not be sensible of a more forlorn and utter solitude than is in Zaidee's heart. They speculate about her, all the inmates of this house ; they wonder who she can be, and whence she comes, and by what strange chance it is that she has become established here. One and all of them find some mystery in Miss Francis ; but poor, young, desolate Miss Francis, who trembles like guilt every time she hears her assumed name, dwells apart and abstracted in this stranger household, scarcely roused yet to any wonder about them. Trembling at her own self-responsibility, sadly feeling in her inmost heart the want of some one whom she can ask what she is to do, and much confused and bewildered by the necessity of directing her own actions, Zaidee as yet lives in a maze, observing everything with her vivid senses, but taking no note of what belongs to herself. In other circumstances, had she been thrown by the natural pressure of poverty or helplessness into such a position, the chances are that, keenly alive to how they treated her, and on the look-out for slights and unkindness, Zaidee would have been as unhappy as it is an orthodox necessity for the reduced gentlewoman and home-sick girl to be. But the poor child's thoughts were otherwise directed : a painful

sense of doing wrong ; a strong necessity for consulting Elizabeth, or Margaret, or Aunt Vivian ; a dreadful weight of guiltiness towards them all, oppressed her spirit. The same apprehension, simple and childish as it was, of some mysterious unknown consequence, which kept her from the bold deed of burning at once the will which was the cause of all her sorrow, made the simplest action of her life here a burden to her conscience. Wilful and wayward enough at home in her free days, Zaidee had an unspeakable horror now of transgressing, by the slightest hair's-breadth, her aunt's code of manners and proprieties. An invisible censor—her own wakeful and anxious conscience—stood by her night and day, and she had never been so solicitous to please her dearest friends as now, when she made up her mind that none of them should ever see her again. This superstitious obedience possessed her sincere and downright young heart so completely, that it even abridged the natural rapidity and impulse of her thoughts. She had to pause perpetually, she who had given up home for ever, to think what they would say at home—and rejoiced sadly that they could never find any trace of her, at the same moment in which she laboured assiduously to control her very thoughts into pleasing them. As she sits here, dark and silent, looking at Nurse with her shining eyes, it is not Nurse, or the depopu-

lated nursery, which is most clearly apparent to the perceptions of Zaidee, far less is it Mrs Disbrowe or the family circle down stairs. The voices of home ring in her ears, the faces of home haunt her vision : poor child, she makes so great an effort to overcome all her own desultory habits, to keep the little garret they have given her in good order, and to take care of her scanty wardrobe—to do all the things which Aunt Vivian, in despair, had long since protested nothing could ever make Zaidee do. Something has come to make her weep over these long-neglected precepts in an agony of eagerness to fulfil them, and that something is the same impulse which has driven Zaidee into this utter solitude—this dim and dreary world.

Yes; you would scarcely think it, looking round in the feeble light upon this low apartment, with all its odds and ends of furniture — its chairs and tables, transferred here when they were no longer good enough for any room down stairs—its arsenal of toys and playthings — its scattering of childish occupation and childish pleasure—that Mrs Disbrowe's nursery could represent the world to any one. It did to this young exile and pilgrim : she did not analyse her feelings, or find out why this place was so strange and cold to her ; she did not think of herself as injured or unfortunate, or treated with unkindness ; she only knew she was far away—a stranger—an orphan, and

desolate. There was no complaint in her heart, but an infinite depth of sadness, a void and oppression hard to endure.

Zaidee could scarcely tell herself, if you asked her, how it was that she came to think of taking another name than her own. Some chance glimpse of the name of Vivian, in the bewildering streets through which she passed on her way to Bedford Place — a strong impression on her own part that only one of her own immediate family, or, at farthest, of Sir Francis Vivian's, could bear the name, and a sudden horror of being discovered by means of it, seized upon Zaidee. Zaidee Vivian ! She knew nothing about the *Times'* advertisements, or any other way except downright finding out, for laying hands upon a fugitive ; but she knew enough to perceive that probably there was not another person in the country bearing her name. As she threaded her way wearily through these glittering streets, in which she did not lose herself, thanks to the quick and ready perceptions which no abstraction was sufficient to obscure, Zaidee, who left home without weeping, had very nearly sat down upon a step to cry over this unlooked-for tribulation ; but she comforted her heart by falling at last upon her father's Christian name, and adopting that to serve her purpose. And Frank Vivian, when he christened his child in her Eastern birthplace, had given her the

favourite female name of his family, in conjunction with the Zaidee, the name of his Greek wife ; so that when, with a deep pang, and a strong sense of shame and guiltiness, Zaidee Vivian, her dark cheeks burning crimson, put away her own name and identity from her, and answered to Mrs Disbrowe's inquiry that she was called Elizabeth Francis, there was still a small consolation in remembering that this was not entirely fiction, but that she had in reality a certain claim to both the names. But Zaidee's terror of herself, in her new circumstances—her horror of being quite worthy of the unqualified condemnation of Aunt Vivian, were increased tenfold by that act. She could not restrain her blush of guilt and self-humiliation when her new associates addressed her as Miss Francis ; the remembrance came home to her poignant and bitter, a reflection scarcely endurable. She had not abjured her friends, her home, her family only, but she had abjured her very name !

“ Eat a morsel, child ; sure you'll die if you keep like this,” said Nurse, starting from a long contemplation of Zaidee's self-occupied face. Nurse, from being a little jealous at first, had come to be very compassionate of the poor little governess.

“ Do you think so, Nurse ?” said Zaidee, with a little eagerness ; “ for I think myself it will be a long, long time before I die.”

“And so it will, please God,” was the response. “You wouldn’t be but thankful to live long, and you so young? But how you’re to keep the life in you, it’s not for me to say. And sure I wish, Miss, dear, you wouldn’t give such heavy sighs.”

“Are they all very kind people in Ireland, Nurse?” said Zaidee.

Nurse’s national pride was flattered. “Bless you, honey, and it’s you has discrimination! Was it kind you said? Oh, then, in my country, if they’d but know you were friendless, they’d clean eat you up with kindness. Ah, Miss, darlin’, you’re young, but you’ve come through trouble—I see it in your face; and them that’s solitary, and orphans, it’s them that knows what kindness is.”

To this effusion of sympathy Zaidee made no response. Perfectly spontaneous and natural as it was, Nurse unquestionably would have been pleased had her young companion become confidential; but confidence was not possible to the solitary child who carried her heart deep in her bosom, and could not expose its throbings to a chance passenger. In her own simple soul, Zaidee had no perception of Nurse’s curiosity, and her poor sad aching heart returned to its world of musings with a deep unconscious sigh.

Solitary and an orphan—so far Nurse was right enough; but no one save herself knew what a wealth

of love and kindness she had cast away for ever. Few tears ever came to dim the wistful shining of those dark eyes, and nothing was farther from Zaidee's thought than any self-pity or lamentation over the lot she had chosen. Her mind was absorbed in quite another direction—in a visionary earnestness of endeavour to follow the rules of her old home, in an eager devotion to all the pursuits that had been followed there, and in a strange want of guidance and control, and dread of acting for herself. She had acted for herself in the one great crisis of her young life ; that was possible—but oh ! the dreary necessity of being her own director now.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EXAMINATION.

“ HAVE you got any brothers and sisters ? ” asked Miss Minnie abruptly.

“ No.” It was impossible to get anything but monosyllables from the lips of Miss Francis.

“ And did you never have any either ? Well, I declare it’s too bad ; things are so unjust,” exclaimed Minnie. “ Some are *only* children, and have all their own way ; and some are third or fourth among a whole lot, and never are cared for at all, except just among the rest. I should like to be an only child—isn’t it fine ?—but then, perhaps, your papa and mamma are poor ? ”

“ They are dead,” said Miss Francis, but without at all raising her eyes.

“ Yes, mamma told us that,” said the promising Minnie ; “ but I wanted to know if it was true. Why are you not in mourning, then ? ”

Zaidee had no answer to make—she sat immovable,

chilled, and silent, and could not have spoken had Minnie Disbrowe's displeasure cost her life.

"Are you vexed?" said Minnie. "Oh, I assure you we shan't be friends if you get vexed so soon: you should see how I tease Charlotte, but she doesn't care. I say, are you glad to be in London?"

"Yes," said Zaidee, with a sigh of thankfulness.

"I wish you would say something else than No and Yes," said her interrogator. "Did you live in the country before you came here, and had you to work then, and did you ever teach little children? I wish you would speak like other people. I want to know all about you,—what did you use to do?"

With a blush of self-humiliation Zaidee answered in perfect simple sincerity, "I was only idle. I never cared for doing anything; but that was because I did not know."

"What did you not know?"

She made no answer. All this interrogation, which might have been very painful to another, was harmless to Zaidee. Now and then, when a question chimed in with her own vein of thought, she answered in her simple way; but her own mind was so much at work always that it had no leisure to attend particularly, or to be wounded by the conversation of others. Her abstraction lost nothing of what was addressed to her, but her ingenuous spirit went straight

forward, and was not to be diverted into byways at another's trivial pleasure. At this moment her imagination recalled to her so vividly the brightness of that time when she did not know, that in her wistful gazing back upon that far-off happiness, Zaidee had no words to say to any one—no words to say to her own heart. Ah! that blessed child's ignorance, which was gone for ever—that unconsciousness of individual fate in which the youngest of the family rested secure, thinking of "We" only, never of "I"—now, alas! the family and all its fortunes were lost and far away, and this dreary I alone remained to Zaidee, the sole thing of which she could not disencumber herself. Friends and love, home and name, gone from her, you may fancy how her wistful eyes looked back to the time when she did not know.

"I suppose your aunt was very cruel to you," burst forth Minnie once again. "Well, I am sure I don't think mammas and aunts are so different. Aunt Westland is a great deal kinder than mamma is often. I am always glad when I have to go there. Was your aunt angry because she had to keep you always—had you a lot of cousins? I do so want to hear what made you think of coming away?"

"I had to come away—I came of my own will," said Zaidee, quietly. "I thought of it because I wished to come."

“ Well, how strange ! they might have found something for you to do at home,” proceeded Minnie ; “ but I daresay it must have been hard staying with your aunt, or you never could have come here. Mamma is to try you, you know, though you are so young ; but *I* shouldn’t like to have all those children to mind. Did you go to school at home ?”

Zaidee could by no means keep up this conversation —once more she answered “ No.”

“ You couldn’t afford to have a governess at home, could you ?” cried Minnie, opening her eyes. “ You must have learned something, or you could not teach the little ones. What lessons did you learn ?”

“ I only can read,” said Zaidee simply ; “ and I never learned that, I think. I can write, too, but not very well ; and I wrote my copies by myself before I came here.”

“ And you never learned to play ?” said Miss Minnie, “ nor to sing, nor to draw, nor to speak French, nor anything ? Upon my word ! and you think you can be a governess ?”

“ Yes ; I only can read and write a little,” said Zaidee with simplicity. She was not at all wounded nor angry ; this was the truth—she had no accomplishments ; and though she might sigh for the fact, a fact it was, and she never dreamt of disputing it.

“ I never cared to learn anything,” said Zaidee after

a pause, a little wistful craving of sympathy impelling her to this volunteered confession. "I never thought of anything when I was a girl. A lady told me I ought to learn, and I intended to try; but then I found immediately that I must come away."

"And why had you to come away?" Minnie Disbrowe's curiosity was extreme.

"Nurse is an Irishwoman too," said Zaidee. "I think they must have kind hearts."

"Who must have kind hearts?" This sort of observation, striking away at a tangent from the main subject of conversation, puzzled the shrewd Minnie more and more.

They were seated in Charlotte's room, which was a back room, and the second best in the house, but, notwithstanding, a somewhat dingy apartment, with hangings not quite so snowy white as they might have been, and a sad confusion of "things" spread about on the bed, the table, and chairs. One or two drawers half open, and a heap of work upon the table, showed at once haste and carelessness; for Charlotte was one of the numerous class who, as she herself said, have always a hurry at the end. The end approached so very closely now that several last necessities had to be finished at railway speed; and woe was on the poor dressmaker, whom Miss Disbrowe pinned to that vacant chair, before which flowed the half-

made breadths of her muslin dressing-gown. This unfortunate person had happily been compelled to go out for some indispensable piece of trimming which nobody else could match, and Minnie Disbrowe and her unemployed young governess were seated now as Rosie and Lettie were seated in the nursery yesterday, hemming, to the great disgust of the former, the frills of this gown. When their conversation reached to this point, Charlotte herself entered hastily. "The great wind of her going" fluttered these heaps of muslin like a gale. Her long full sweeping dress and careless movements made the greatest commotion in the quietness of this apartment. Charlotte was in a hurry, and her amiable young sister looked on with great satisfaction while first one piece of finery and then another, swept down by her hasty motions, fell upon the floor.

"I'll tell mamma of you, Minnie. Do you hear, Miss Francis?" cried the exasperated bride; "I won't have you two gossiping and looking on while I am in such a hurry. I want that piece of white ribbon, and I want my glove-box. How am I to look through all these drawers, do you think, and Edward waiting for me down stairs? Minnie, do come and help me; and for goodness' sake, Miss Francis, don't stare at one, but get up and look for my ribbon! Where can these gloves be? I am sure all these things

lying about is enough to put any one out of patience —people are so untidy—can you not clear them away?"

"It is not my business, and I am sure it is not Miss Francis's," said Minnie, making common cause with her companion. "Miss Francis came to teach the children, and not to work at your marriage things."

"The children have holiday till after Tuesday," said Charlotte, finding it better policy to be good-humoured. "Do help me—there's a good girl—I am in such a hurry; one can't always help one's temper. You won't mind what I say, Miss Francis; and do look for my white ribbon."

Mr Edward Lancaster down stairs stands in the middle of the drawing-room swinging about the parasol of his bride, and marvelling why Charlotte does not come. "Charlotte always has to be waited for," says Leo, shrugging his shoulders. "See what you have to look for, Lancaster."

"She has such a multitude of things to do, poor child," apologises mamma. Edward only laughs, and swings in his hand the little parasol,—he is not much disturbed by what he has to look for; for Edward is a good fellow, and honestly likes his bride, faults and all.

The drawers are all tumbled out, it is true, and the

poor dressmaker finds a sad maze among her materials when she returns, but gloves and ribbons are happily found at last. Charlotte sweeps forth again, carrying in her train the talkative Minnie, and solitary Zaidee once more sits at work alone.

CHAPTER VII.

A L O N E.

ZAIDEE VIVIAN—sitting solitary in this back room, with its one dim window looking out upon the expanse of other back windows, a dreary array of backs of houses, and long parallels of brick walls enclosing strips of soil, miscalled gardens—works at the frills of Miss Disbrowe's morning-dress, and is very glad to be alone. There is not much noise at any time in Bedford Place : it lies intrenched and safe in the heart of a great congregation of squares, and flanked by many similar streets and places of gentility, calm and grim and highly respectable, so that the sounds which find their way up here to the back bed-room, on the second floor, are faint and far-away echoes of the cries of merchandise, mixed with, now and then, the groan of a passing organ, or whoop of passing schoolboy—distant sounds, representing almost as little the genuine roar of London, as did the rural noises of the Cheshire countryside. Charlotte Disbrowe's pretty things lie

heaped around on every available morsel of space, and the long strip of pink muslin passes slowly over Zaidee's forefinger. There is a dreary hush and lull in her solitude ; the present does not press on her, but glides over her like the muslin over her hand. Zaidee thinks of her home.

No, this is not thinking ; she *sees* her home under its stormy firmament of cloud and wind ; she sees the sunset blazing with a wondrous glory over the low dusky line of yonder sea. No parallelograms of genteel houses, but a flat breadth of Cheshire pasture-land, lies under the eyes of Zaidee. She is present in the Grange in her heart, and wots not of Bedford Place ; and the bride is not Charlotte Disbrowe, but Elizabeth Vivian ; the companion is her loving cousin Sophy, and not this presumptuous child ; and as she lifts her eyes upon the scene about her, she thinks of Aunt Vivian's dressing-room, where there is a costly litter of lace and fine linen belonging to another bridal ; and then of her own little chamber, as she saw it last in the doubtful chilly grey of the morning, with the red cross solemnly hovering in the dim light, and the white dress spread upon the bed. Not for nothing has this red cross signed the brow of Zaidee morning and evening as she knelt at her prayers—but she has never learned to make it emblematical. The sign of redemption, the type of those deepest depths of love and self-

sacrifice which we cannot fathom or reach unto—to Zaidee Vivian it is but the cross in her chamber window, a mystic influence of which she cannot explain the import or the power.

Is Elizabeth married by this time?—had they a very great party at Philip's birthday, as Sophy wished?—would Mr Powis be there to please Margaret, and Aunt Blundell to please no one?—had Percy come to London yet?—all these questions floated vaguely through her mind. The humblest morsel of intelligence, how gladly this poor child would have received it, and how she longed and hungered to know something of them all. And what if Percy had come to London?—what if he should meet with her in this very street at Mrs Disbrowe's door? Zaidee, who just now was pining for a word or a look from home, shrank with terror at the idea, and had almost vowed never to cross Mrs Disbrowe's threshold, but to keep herself hidden in the nursery, where no one surely could find her out.

When Nurse came into Miss Charlotte's room, with yesterday's paper in her hand. This good woman had a great interest in news, and loved to hear what was going on abroad and at home; and Nurse, moreover, had the utmost veneration for a newspaper, and read it all from beginning to end whenever she could find and appropriate the precious broadsheet. But her eyes

had a great trick of failing her when there were big words and “small print” in question ; and glad to employ another pair than her own, it was the wily custom of Nurse to propitiate any “good reader” who fell in her way, by reading aloud to them, in the first place, after her fashion, the first paragraphs which caught her eye in the newspaper. This required to be cautiously contrived when Minnie Disbrowe was the subject of the manœuvre ; but there was less care needed with the unaccustomed governess.

“They’re all in the garden, Miss, dear,” said Nurse, “every soul of them, but Master Tommy, and he’s with his mamma. Sure it’s little quiet comes to my share—and I like a look at the newspapers when I can. You’re lonesome by yourself,—easy, honey, sure I’ll read the paper to you.”

Whereupon Nurse began at the beginning—the proper place, and, as it happened, read aloud, with many blunders and elaborate spellings, some of those suggestive advertisements which sometimes throw shadows of family tragedy over the world of lighter matters which fill the columns of the great daily journal—appeals to some beloved fugitive, entreaties for return, and assurances that all was forgiven. Zaidee listened with a silent wonder ; these advertisements were like glimpses of other worlds revolving in a similar orbit to her own. Other people there were,

then, compelled to flee from home, and friends, and comfort. Her heart expanded with a wistful sympathy. Simple Zaidee knew nothing of guilt or disgrace involved in these unknown stories—she only fancied that they might be like her own.

“Poor soul !” ejaculated Nurse, “but sure it’s me that has the weak eyesight. Read it your own self, Miss, and I’ll take the bit of hemming, dear : here, honey—there’s all the news in the world in it, and it’s fine exercise reading. Sure and you’ll let me hear.”

And Nurse put the paper into Zaidee’s hand, and pointed her eagerly to the spot she had paused at. “It’s a child lost, poor little soul ! Let’s hear about her, Miss, for the pity. I’ve cried for such many’s the day.”

Unsuspectingly Zaidee looked on the paper ; in a moment her cheeks flushed with their dark rich colour, her eyes filled with tears, her voice was choked. It was not the careful description of Zaidee Vivian, the reward offered for intelligence of her, that smote first upon her heart,—it was words addressed to herself. This great public paper, brimful of the daily doings of the great world, conveyed a cry of love and tenderness to her, earnest, pathetic, anxious. As she read it, her head grew dizzy. She seemed to see a little crowd before her,—Aunt Vivian, with Sophy’s pretty face full of tears, appearing over her shoulder, and Mar-

garet and Elizabeth at their mother's side. "Zaidee, child!—dear Zay! come home to us again," said the paper; "we would lose a hundred estates rather than you. Zaidee—Zaidee, come home!"

It was as much as she could do to restrain the great cry which burst to her lips. It seemed to her an aggravation of all her previous sin against them that there she sat fixed and silent, and dared not answer. A host of burning words rushed to her tongue. She involuntarily raised her arms; but Zaidee must not throw herself upon the ground, and cry aloud for blessings on them—must not say their names, or weep, or do anything to betray the passionate emotion which seized her at sight of these words. But though she could restrain herself from either words or tears, she could not control the choking voice, or force herself to read or speak to the humble observer who sat beside her. The paper was between Nurse, whose eyes were bent upon the hemming, and her young reader; but such a world of interval there was between the youthful swelling heart, and that tame elder one, worn into calm and commonplace, of whatever fashion her youth might have been.

"Sure it's entertaining," said Nurse at last, with some offence in her tone. "When you're done, Miss, darlin', I wouldn't mind taking a look at them bits of news myself."

But hints were strangely lost on Zaidee. She was so perfectly in the habit of saying what she meant herself, that an indirect reproof glanced off from her simplicity harmless. And her heart was full of strong and primitive feeling. She had no space in it for secondary emotions, for trifling talk or querulousness. Perhaps Zaidee might not have had sufficient self-denial, had she thought of it, to make a great effort for Nurse's amusement ; but she did not think of it —she thought of nothing but this dear voice of home, which echoed into the depths of her heart.

The puckers drew together on Nurse's good-humoured brow. "Young folks and old, there's ne'er a one of them better than another," said Nurse. "Every soul looks to itself, and never a one to its neighbour. Do you call that religion ? nor charity neither ? — and some is so high, they wouldn't stoop to do a good turn to the like of me. Sure and your eyesight's fitter for Miss Charlotte's hemming than mine. I'll thank you for the paper ; it's me own."

Zaidee looked up hastily, and it was impossible to misinterpret the cloud on Nurse's face.

"Are you angry ?" she said earnestly. "Have I done wrong ? But, Nurse, your face is always kind. I am glad when I look at you, and I have no one in the world now to tell me what I am to do."

"Poor soul !" Nurse was mollified. "What had

the like of you to do leaving home? Is it angry you say? There, honey, read a bit of the news, and we'll all be friends again."

Zaidee was almost as uninstructed as Nurse herself, and as reverential of the newspaper; and with a strong effort, and a heart beating high with scarcely suppressed excitement, she began, like Nurse, at the beginning. A great deal of heavy reading she had to get through, toiling conscientiously at the newspaper, and very thankful was she when at last an interruption came; but she saved the precious broadsheet for her pains, and carried it to her attic with her. Full of all the imperial interests of the civilised world, great movements, great intelligence, commerce, and science, and government, but to Zaidee Vivian more precious by far—it was a letter from home.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCHOOL.

IT is a day of great exhaustion and languor in Bedford Place. Every one who comes up-stairs, comes with dragging footsteps, slow and toilsome ; every one who enters the drawing-room sinks despondingly on sofa or easy-chair, and exclaims of being “ so tired ! ” The flatness of excitement overpast is upon the whole house. The maids yawn at their work, and Buttons himself looks half asleep. The drawing-room is carelessly arranged, the little parlour in a litter, and Mrs Disbrowe’s own apartment strewed with ends of ribbon and scraps of thread ; but Mrs Disbrowe, too tired to find fault, passes over these shortcomings with unwonted forbearance. Breakfast is late, and there is no freshness in the morning ; but every one is submissive, and bears with charred toast and cold tea with a singular magnanimity. Even mamma has forgotten her pink ribbons this morning, and Minnie is not sent off in disgrace for her ravelled locks and

broken-down slippers. It is the first day after the marriage day ; the first morning on which the family have awoke to find Charlotte gone.

Papa, who does not say anything, instinctively feels the air chilly this morning, and lounges over the fire in his dressing-gown when he should have been at his office. Leo is pale, and somehow reminds one strongly of those baskets of empty wine-bottles which stand below in the hall. Mrs Disbrowe, presiding at the table, forgets who takes tea and who coffee, and, with a motherly sigh, misses Charlotte, who was her deputy here. It was a very merry wedding, marked by few sentimentalities ; and father and mother are glad to have their child so well married, and proud of the display of friends, the sparkling table, and the gay procession. There was nothing to lament about in the whole business ; and Mrs Disbrowe pretended to no particular refinement of tenderness. Notwithstanding, this first morning, everybody perceived the first break in the family ; everybody was a little uncomfortable, and felt a want and vacancy. She was *their* Charlotte, this careless young lady, and they missed her when she was gone.

So mamma, for all her activity, will rather waste this morning, sitting on a sofa musing, living yesterday over again, and taking little note of to-day. Minnie, unreproved for once, will sit at the window

with a novel in her lap. There will be so much to talk about down stairs, that the household work will fare badly, and Mrs Disbrowe's dinner turn out much less perfect than usual. In such a well-governed house, this momentary lull does no harm. One day to the memory of Miss Charlotte Disbrowe is an abundant sacrifice. Mamma will talk of her daughter, Mrs Lancaster, and be herself after to-morrow.

But the languor of the rest of the house has not reached to the nursery. Everything is elaborately correct and proper to-day in this high-seated domain. If Nurse longs in the depths of her heart to share the gossip in the kitchen, Nurse is prudent, and keeps her desire under cover. Rosie and Lettie, seated together as usual, are unfolding their work at a window. Jack, in profound contemplation, studies the basin of pure water in which he has launched his boat. Harry is busily occupied making a paper boat, to rival that famous production of wood. Sissy and Tommy play at cat's cradle. They are all pursuing their amusements elaborately, and not with the freedom of common use. Some hidden movement of rebellion is in the nursery to-day.

For upon the table are a number of books well thumbed, and worn with use—primers, spelling-books, reading-books, little grammars and geographies, and well-inked copy-lines. There also lies a light cane,

once a potent sceptre in the firm hand of Charlotte ; and beside this table, pale, and somewhat agitated, Miss Francis sits restlessly, trembling with uncertainty and confusion, looking upon all these childish faces, which are full of resistance, wondering to see how unlovely they are ; nervous and afraid of speaking to them, ready to cry with vexation, with wistful eagerness and shame. Yes, it is very true. The poor young girlish governess is not only afraid of Minnie, but of the very youngest and smallest of Minnie's brothers and sisters, and has not the faintest idea how she must begin with them, nor plan for managing the small unruly population given to her care.

And Nurse, coming and going silently, shakes her head, and makes signs to Zaidee, warning her to begin ; then, sitting down close by her, touches her now and then with her elbow. Finding all this insufficient, Nurse at last opens her lips and whispers, "Miss ! sure you'll never get the better of them, if you never try. Why can't you begin, honey ? They're waiting, every soul of them : say they're to come and get their lessons. Sure I'd try."

Thus admonished, Zaidee, turning very white and very red, gathers up her courage. It is strange how unsympathetic, how full of hard and pitiless opposition, these little faces are, as the distressed girl looks round upon them. They have no compassion

for her utter solitude, her terror of themselves. These children are all set against her, each after its own fashion ; the instincts of the childish heart are not touched in gentleness for her. She is only their natural enemy, the new governess, and these little tyrants would crush her if they could.

“ Will you come and read ? Mrs Disbrowe said you should,” said Zaidee, addressing Rosie and Lettie. Neither Rosie nor Lettie were discomposed ; but the breath of the questioner came quick, and her voice was timid and hurried. Poor Zaidee, at fourteen, in the fright and novelty and desolateness of her new position, could by no means look authoritative or dignified.

“ Oh, please, we have some work to do for mamma,” said Rosie, whose heart smote her a little as she looked up at Zaidee’s face. “ Mamma never said we were to get our lessons to you. I am sure you cannot teach *us*,” said the less amiable Lettie. From this unpromising commencement Zaidee shrank, making no answer. Her natural candour was almost too much for her at this conjuncture. It was quite possible, after all, that this solemn *us*, the twins of Bedford Place, were already too learned to be instructed by her.

“ Why, then, and the young lady has nothing to do but ask your mamma ? ” cried Nurse, the sole support

of the stranger. "Oh, children, is that all the memory you have for what I told you?"

But even with Nurse's support Zaidee did not venture to return to the charge. She was no match for these precocious little women. The little boys might possibly be more propitious. This trembling representative of instruction turned to them.

"Will *you* come, then?" said Zaidee, who had not courage to call Jack and Harry by their names; "you have only to read and say your lessons, and I am sure it does not matter who hears you."

"Doesn't it, though?" cried Harry—phlegmatic Jack meanwhile sucking his finger, and saying nothing, as he stands apart in the invincible might of passive resistance; "it matters to me! I won't say my lessons to a woman; not if you were twice as big, and twice as old. I won't have a girl ordering me, now Charlotte's married. I'll go to school. I won't say my lessons to you!"

Then she turned round very swiftly and suddenly, and stooped to the younger members of the family, who sat on the floor behind. "Little children, will you let me teach you?" said Zaidee; "you should be good, you are such little ones. Will *you* come to me?"

Sissy Disbrowe tossed her small head with infantine disdain. "Miss Francis means Tommy; it is not

me," said Sissy ; while Tommy roared manfully, " I won't say any lessons to anybody ; no ! no ! no ! "

The poor little governess stood alone, facing this amiable family, every member of which, stimulated and encouraged by the example of the others, faced her with the triumph of successful sedition. Zaidee ceased trembling, after a moment, and became very upright and very pale.

" This is what Mrs Disbrowe keeps me for," said Zaidee ; " she does not want me for anything else ; I have no right to stay with her. I am here only because I am to teach you. I know very little—it is all quite true ; but I am to hear you your lessons. That is what I am here for ; and I am obliged to do it, or I must go away. I have no friends. I cannot go away unless Mrs Disbrowe sends me. It is not that I love to teach, or that I am very good for it ; but I must—do you hear me ?—I *must* ; because I am here for no other thing."

When Zaidee had said her speech, she remained still looking round upon them all, her dark face lighted up with resolve and decision. The children still confronted her, all of them rebellious and unmoved. What was she to do, to express in purpose what she had said in words ?

Poor ignorant child ! she was bewildered and stunned to the heart. She could not do anything ;

not an idea came to Zaidee of how she could reduce into subordination this little contumacious company. Her words came back to her with a dreary echo—she *must* do it ; but the children were all quite fearless and indifferent to her, while she trembled before them. She would not shed tears in their sight ; but the tears, notwithstanding, blinded her eyes. She stood in the centre of the room, sick at heart. What should she do ?

But the door opened at the moment, and with a sudden start the countenances changed before her. Mamma had come herself to superintend the first day's teaching. How it was, Zaidee could not tell ; but before half an hour was over, two gentle little pupils, being no other than Rosie and Lettie, whilom leaders of the insurrection, stood before her, meekly reading their lessons. To defy the governess was easy enough, but it was quite a different matter to defy mamma.

CHAPTER IX.

SYMPATHY.

“A LITTLE pack of plagues—no better. Miss, darlin’, do you hear me? Sure it’s you will have your hands full of them.”

“Did you speak to me, Nurse?” asked Zaidee.

“Was it speak to you? I was mourning for you, poor soul, and you so young,” said Nurse compassionately; “it isn’t the like of this you’ve been used with, I can see, for all so little as you say.”

But Zaidee was unresponsive, and did not understand the pity bestowed upon her. She looked up for an instant with one of her wistful looks, half vacant, half inquiring, and then returned silently to her work, which was “plain-sewing”—sewing of the very plainest, such as there was considerable need for in Mrs Disbrowe’s well-populated house.

“I wouldn’t lay myself out for more trades nor one, I wouldn’t,” continued Nurse. “I’d not be slaving all the night if I had to fight with them little bothers

all the day. I'd be one thing or another, and not let nobody take the advantage of me. The lady is none so great a friend to you."

The girl looked up once more with her half-awakened eyes, but Zaidee could not be persuaded to pity herself on this score. From a long, long distance off, the summit and elevation of her own thoughts, she looked upon Nurse, who pitied the poor young governess. All the while Mrs Disbrowe's plain-sewing went on unconsciously, and on the table between the windows you could see the school-books and copy-books gathered in a little heap. Zaidee was wearied with a real day's work, but the sensation was pleasant to her. True, she had been blinded with tears of vexation and embarrassment more than once to-day ; but her thoughts were so very far removed from making a grievance of this, or of anything else in the lot she had chosen, that the simple-hearted child did not even apprehend the idea when it was presented to her ; for Zaidee not only did Mrs Disbrowe's plain-sewing willingly, but with devotion, and had a secret satisfaction in doing it, while with infinite care she regulated her even line of stitches, thinking to please Aunt Vivian in the homely work which Aunt Vivian should never see.

"Bless the child!" said Nurse impatiently. "Don't you know what I mean, then ; or are you afeared to

speak your mind for me telling on you? Never a one needs be afeared of me."

"I am not afraid," said Zaidee.

"Then, why don't you answer me frank, when I am sorry for you?" said the perplexed Nurse.

It was very bad policy to be silent; for nothing could have irritated Nurse so much as this quiet upward look, wistful, and something startled; but Zaidee was unused to emergencies, and, quite puzzled, could find nothing to say.

"O, then, and it's you would try a saint!" said the provoked sympathiser. "You are as well off as you want to be, are you, and don't want no kindness from the likes of me?"

"Yes, Nurse," said simple Zaidee. "I am well off, am I not? But I like to see your face look kindly—I have no one else to look kind upon me now."

"Well, then, wasn't that what I said?" cried Nurse; "and why do you be tasing decent people out of their patience?—wasn't I mourning for you, all by yourself, and making a lament for such a young child cast upon the world, and giving you a word of advice—and you to turn the cold shoulder on me like this!"

But to Nurse's infinite astonishment this pathetic appeal produced neither apology nor justification, nor so much as a passing notice; for when Zaidee spoke

again, it was to ask a question, striking sharp off from this personal discussion.

“Is it long, Nurse, since you came from home?”

“From home!” The heart of the elderly woman was surprised back again for a moment into childhood. “Lord bless you, honey, what’s the meaning of the word to me? I went among strangers when I was ten years old, and ever since hither and thither I’ve gone to earn my bread; this one’s kitchen and the other one’s nursery,—that’s all the home there’s been to me in this world for five-and-thirty years. “Sure is the word that says service is no heritage. Ay, did the child say home? There was a cabin oncet, and an ould lone woman in it—well, well, we’ll spake o’ that no more.”

“Was that your mother, Nurse?” said Zaidee, looking up with her awed and earnest eyes, and with the simple interest and curiosity of a child.

“Hush, darlin’; sure it’s many a year ago—the saints make her bed—the heavens be her rest,” said Nurse, turning her head aside with devout mutterings, which Zaidee did not understand; for Nurse, whom fortune and Mrs Disbrowe compelled to keep very quiet in respect to her faith, was an orthodox Catholic at heart. “I’m a lone woman now myself, Miss,” continued Nurse, wiping from the corner of her eye

the ghost 'of a tear. "There's neither child nor kin to make a moan for me—girl and woman, I've lived with strangers. O, then, but it's a weary time since I came away from home!"

"And why did you come—did they send you away?" asked Zaidee anxiously.

"Them that was round the board was more nor aqual to what was on it," said Nurse solemnly. "Many a one's been drove like me by the hunger and the poverty. Boys and girls we were eleven of us, and life is sweet. We were scattered from the door like the thistle-down, and one fell here, and one fell there, and this boy 'listed for a soulhier, and that boy went to sea. Brother and sister, father and mother, every one's dead and gone but me; and for all so many times I've thought my heart was clean broke, yet sure, Miss, you see me here."

"Did you ever wish your heart would break?" asked Zaidee with great earnestness. Her simple mind was already comparing its own experiences with the experiences of this long-lived woman. The sincere and unenlightened child could see no difference between her own fourteen and Nurse's five-and-forty years; nor between the child of an Irish cabin and the favourite of the Grange. The widest catholicity was in Zaidee's simple heart; in the broad estimate she formed of

nature and its primitive emotions, distinctions of sphere or station were unknown.

“Ever and always I had to earn my bread,” said Nurse slowly. “I’ve been a hard-working woman, lone and poor, with never another to mind but only meself from one year’s end to another; but life is sweet. My heart was broke entirely in my young days with trouble and sorrow, but I never brought them by wishing. No, honey, grief’s sore, but life’s precious—I’ll wait my Maker’s time.”

“Do you think it is a sin to wish to die?” asked Zaidee, looking up once more with her wistful eyes.

“O, then, isn’t it a sin to cross the Lord’s will any way?” said Nurse, with a shudder. Spite of all her loneliness and hardship, this poor woman felt that truly the light was sweet, and it was a pleasant thing to behold the sun.

“I would not wish it, all for my own sake,” said Zaidee very rapidly, and under her breath. “But if it would be good for some one else, what would you do then?”

“Heart alive! Do you take me for a haithen, child?” said the offended Nurse. “Never man nor woman all my days was the worse of me.”

Zaidee, who was looking up at her with earnest inquiry, suddenly dropped her anxious eyes, to which

the tears came in a momentary flood. She could not see her needle nor her line of even stitches for the moment—she could only see the dreary fortune which had made her dearest friends so much “the worse” for her. When the blindness cleared away, the poor child went on eagerly with her plain-sewing, and with a deep unspoken thankfulness looked round upon the bare walls of Mrs Disbrowe’s nursery. It was but a cold ungracious dwelling-place for one who had been nursed in such a home of love and kindness, and an approaching din of sound made the young governess shrink aside to a corner of the fireplace, that she might not shut out these noisy happy children from the hearth which belonged to them. Yet not a murmur of repining was in Zaidee’s mind. Her first “trouble” was great enough to swallow up all smaller ones. Philip’s supplanter, the legal but most unwilling heiress of the Grange, had no room in her unsophisticated thoughts for the little personal injuries of her new lot,—she was so very thankful to be here out of Philip’s way, and separated from the home where she could never again be only Zaidee, the dependent and spoiled child. Poor homely Irish Nurse! she could by no means understand this strange young companion of hers,—they conversed together in common language, but in understanding had a world

between them, though neither was aware of it ; and Nurse was Zaidee's sole companion through these long evenings. Books were not to be had, nor, had they been attainable, would she have cared for reading now ; for Zaidee's mind had taken a stride far away from the world of fiction and fancy, and she was busy with her own mystery for long hours, which, in other circumstances, she would have spent over the innocent mysteries of story-telling. Zaidee's literature had come to be as contracted as her cousin Elizabeth's,— her father's Bible and that advertisement in the *Times*. She read nothing else, but these she read every day.

CHAPTER X.

FAILURE.

“I DON’T see why I should mind other people’s children—though they *are* my brothers and sisters,” says a young lady in a very light-coloured silk dress, with gay waving ribbons, and an unusual profusion of ornament. “But I suppose it’s no good quarrelling with mamma, especially when one thinks of that horrid old Mrs Lancaster. Here, Rosie and Lettie, let’s see what you’ve been about.”

But for a mystical circle of gold upon the third finger of her left hand, and the light colour of her dress, which on this November day needs some excuse, you would fancy this to be Miss Charlotte Disbrowe ; but when you perceive how mamma has permitted her, without a word of reproof, to take off her bonnet here, and leave it on the drawing-room table, and how there is no explanation asked of the under-tone in which these last remarks are delivered, you will see at once that this is Mrs Edward Lancaster, whose card-case

lies on the table under her bounet, and whom mamma has just requested to see what progress the children are making under their new governess. Mrs Edward thrusts up her bracelets on her arms, very much as Mary down-stairs thrusts up her sleeves when she goes to her daily labours, and, seating herself on the settee, calls before her once more the former subjects of her maiden reign.

“Do you hear, you little ones? What are you doing all day long? That last frill you hemmed for me was shamefully done—shamefully!—not much credit to Miss Francis teaching you.”

“Oh, please, Charlotte, we don’t let her teach us,” cried the frank and indiscreet Rosie.

“She can’t!” said Lettie, with a frown. “We were always good with Charlotte—you know we were; but we won’t be taught by Miss Francis. She doesn’t know so much as I do, nor even as Rosie does—she cannot teach *us*.”

“Upon my word!” cried Mrs Edward Lancaster. “I should like to know, then, what is the good of having her here?”

“O, please, Charlotte, will you speak to mamma?—we don’t want to have her here,” cried Lettie—“she is not good enough for *our* governess, and we want so much to go to school!”

“Well, I confess I shall think mamma behaved very

shabbily to me if she lets you go to school," said Mrs Edward,—"you are saucy little things. How should you know about Miss Francis—have you got no lessons to learn? She is not half strict enough with you."

"Please, Lettie told me not to learn any lessons," confessed again Rosie the indiscreet.

"You are sweet children—it is quite a pleasure teaching you," said the married sister, administering to small sour Lettie a sharp tap on the cheek. "I'll tell mamma you are two grumbling little creatures, and ought to be whipt. There, get away—I'll have Tommy and Sissy now."

But while the twins stole off—one of them humble and tearful, the other sulky and full of wrath—Sissy, being interrogated, confessed that she too was rebellious to the rule of Miss Francis, and explained, that "p'ease, I like best to play;" while Tommy, a stout little recusant, snapped his plump thumb and forefinger, and echoed his elder brother's defiance of womankind, all and sundry. "She s'ant teach me!—she's only a woman!" cried the valiant Master Tom; whereupon the ready hand of Mrs Edward visited Tommy's shoulders with another stroke.

"Upon my word! I could never have believed I was so blinded to them before I was married!" cried Mrs Edward. "Such little rude grumbling things!—

such tempers for children ! Why, mamma, what do you keep that girl for ?—they're not learning anything ! ”

“ They got their lessons so irregularly, Charlotte, for some time before your marriage,” said Mrs Disbrowe with dignity, “ it is not wonderful that they should be a little out of discipline.”

“ Well, I declare, mamma, that is very unkind of you,” said Mrs Edward Lancaster, who, a matron and married lady in her own right, veiled her bonnet to no one under the sun, “ when you know what a slave I was among them, and what trouble I had, and how actually Edward had to be put off again and again, till you had got a governess. You will never treat Minnie or any of the rest as you have treated me. You made *me* the governess. I am sure you know it is quite true.”

“ You got a very good education, Charlotte—better than I can afford to give Minnie,” said Mrs Disbrowe quietly. Mrs Edward’s reddening cheeks cooled down—it was not quite dignified, after all, to grumble, or to give any one occasion to say she was not the most prosperous woman in the world.

“ Yes, indeed ; mamma does not send me to school—mamma has no masters for me ! ” cried Minnie. “ Never mind ; I don’t care though Charlotte had all the advantages ; see if she does any better than I shall do. I can play as well as she can, now ! ”

“These children are quite unbearable,” said Mrs Edward. “Think of treating *me* like a school-girl! as if *I* cared for playing better than Minnie; but I tell you they are learning nothing. Mamma, what do you keep this girl for?—I am sure she is not teaching *them*.”

“It is not very long since she came—she will do better by-and-by,” said Mrs Disbrowe, but with a little hesitation unusual to her firm and assured tones. “They are all self-willed—I must see to the nursery lessons myself for a day or two, and the children must understand that I positively *don’t* intend to send them to school. Miss Francis is young and timid—she does not like to punish them as you did, Charlotte, and that is just the disadvantage of that style of teaching. When you begin so, you must continue. There is Harry understands being whipped, I believe, but he cares for nothing less.”

“And that is all my fault?” said Mrs Edward. “Well, I am sure you are not very complimentary, mamma; but I know one thing I should never do—I should never keep a governess for my children unless she could teach them; I feel quite convinced of that!”

Though Mrs Edward Lancaster was emphatic, Mrs Disbrowe was not dismayed; yet a certain shade of disquiet was upon the comely forehead of mamma.

She was extremely well pleased when the door opened, and Buttons announced a stream of Maurices, young ladies who had seen the bride's entrance into her mother's house from their own windows opposite, and who seized the opportunity to fall upon Charlotte *en masse*, and hear at greater length than had yet been possible her foreign experiences and all the mishaps of her travel, for Charlotte had been abroad on her wedding tour. From the animated conversation which followed, mamma withdrew. It did not strike her with any wonder to hear Charlotte's voice so loud and so long-continued. It was very natural that the bride should be somewhat dictatorial and authoritative among her former companions, who were only young ladies still ; and Charlotte already spoke of young ladies with a friendly contempt—they had no experience—they had nothing but music, and crochet, and such trifles to occupy them ; whereas Mrs Edward Lancaster had for a whole week been supreme in her own house, and made blunders enough to endow with experience a whole colony of brides.

Mamma withdrew into the background ; and upon her comely face there was a shadow of annoyance. What did she keep that girl for ? There was no denying that the new governess was a failure—that whatever she might be fit for, she was not fit for the management of Mrs Disbrowe's nursery—that even little

Tommy himself could silence Miss Francis ; and that she was too young, too timid, too shy, to make authority for herself among these unruly children. “ What do you keep her for ? ” asked Mrs Edward. Her mother almost blushed as she faltered, and could not tell. Truth to speak, Mrs Disbrowe carries a heart under that black satin gown of hers, under that brooch which is five-and-twenty years old—a heart where soft womanly pity and charity have made themselves a stronghold, and will not be dislodged, though they dwell under the same roof with many a worldly principle alien to their nature. It is quite against Mrs Disbrowe’s “ principles ” to keep a useless person in her household ; hitherto it has always been her rule, when her retainers were proved incapable, to dismiss them without more ado. But her womanly heart relents over Zaidee—she cannot thrust this poor forlorn child forth upon the world. Miss Francis cannot teach the children, and the children will not be taught by her ; but Mrs Disbrowe vainly tries to hide this fact from her own acute perceptions, and thinks of expedients and another trial, feeling, at the same time, however this may turn out, that still she cannot refuse the shelter of her roof to this solitary stranger. Many a disturbed thought the matter brings to the mind and spirit of mamma.

Meanwhile Zaidee herself, labouring under the same

consciousness, with double diligence works at the plain-sewing, and entreats Tommy and Sissy, and the still more formidable elders of these hard-hearted children, to let her teach them. But it will not do—the nursery longs with all its heart to be dispersed into the open air of schools and play-grounds. The governess has no chance against these little conspirators, for they have all made up their minds that she shall not succeed.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER TRIAL.

“NEITHER Rosie nor Lettie ready with their lessons ! Are these children careless of what you say to them, Miss Francis ?”

Mamma knows very well that they are more than careless, but puts on a stately unconsciousness to awe the rebels.

Poor Miss Francis !—she has an instinctive trust in Mrs Disbrowe, but an instinctive terror of the children. Zaidee never found herself at the bar of justice either as culprit or accuser before, and she cannot tell what answer to make to this question. The little recusants see her falter, and grow bolder. Mrs Disbrowe sees it, and softens into pity ; for neither of them know that Zaidee’s thoughts are far away wandering, and that she has to call them back over half this realm of England to meet the present need.

“O, please, mamma, Miss Francis does not give

us our lessons as Charlotte used to do," says Lettie. "She speaks so low, sometimes we cannot understand her ; and she does not mind us at all, but is always thinking of something else ; and, please, mamma, Rosie and I would much rather go to school."

"I am obliged to you, little girls, for favouring me with your opinion," answers mamma, with awful sarcasm. "But I do not intend that you should go to school, so that question is settled. Now, I have no doubt Miss Francis minds you as much as it is possible to mind such rude children, and I have come to-day to see that you mind her."

Whereupon Lettie looks at Miss Francis, the very type and impersonation of sullen resistance, and Rosie, more susceptible, begins to cry. . Rosie, though she has the seniority by a few minutes over her twin sister, is very much under Lettie's sway ; and if they had been born a hundred miles or a hundred years apart, there could not have been a more distinct and decided difference than between these two, the children of one hour.

"Give these little girls their tasks, Miss Francis," said mamma, "and we will see how well they can be learned to-day. And now, Harry, take your finger out of your mouth, and put away your whip ; Miss Francis is waiting for you."

Nobody dares resist this unquestionable authority.

The most docile little pupils in the world stand before the hesitating Zaidee, who trembles with a shy tremor when she tries to put questions to the children in the presence of Mrs Disbrowe. But even Lettie does not dare adventure a glance aside, or Harry fail of attention. Nurse, behind-backs, with great demonstration of quietness, is laying Sissy's little frocks into the nursery wardrobe ; and now Nurse may escape down stairs for a much-prized gossip with the kitchen. She is off duty this morning ; and at Nurse's table solemnly sits mamma, with her fine needlework in her hand, her ears all attention, her eyes vigilantly discerning the slight glance or movement. Such orderly, obedient, pretty-behaved children never existed as these small scions of the house of Disbrowe under the inspection of mamma.

But by-and-by intrusive sounds from below break the halcyon calm of this well-ordered schoolroom. Mamma's magisterial quiet is disturbed—she moves on her seat uneasily—looks annoyed—becomes anxious—then finally, lifting one steady glance upon the little company round her, consults her watch, and gathers up her work. “As you seem to be going on so well, I think I may leave you,” says Mrs Disbrowe. “I depend upon you, children, to pay the greatest attention to Miss Francis ; and you will let me know, my dear, if you require me to exert my authority again.”

With this gracious parting address to the governess, the lady of the house takes her stately course down stairs—far away down stairs to the dining-room on the ground floor, to ask what is the cause of these sounds of insubordination. Alas ! the insubordination in the nursery can no longer reach the ear of mamma ; and with the last flutter of Mrs Disbrowe's pink ribbons, the peace of poor Zaidee is once more scattered to the winds.

For Lettie does not scruple to bend her sullen brows upon the governess. Harry snatches his book away and seizes his whip again ; taciturn Jack has a bit of wood in his pocket, and straightway begins to whittle. Alas for poor Zaidee !—if that would do her any good, she could cry heartily ; but nothing could do Zaidee less good than crying. Mamma is out of hearing—even Nurse is gone ; there is no one to take her part—no one to defend her, and the little tyrants have their way.

“ Mrs Disbrowe said you were to learn your lessons—it is not honourable—it is breaking your word ! ” cried Zaidee. But the Misses and Masters Disbrowe were not pledged by their honour.

“ It isn’t breaking my word. I never promised mamma,” said Harry, whose top was already spinning merrily. “ Mamma doesn’t know as we do,” said Lettie, emboldened into childish insolence. “ You cannot teach *us*,—you know yourself you cannot.”

“I am older than you are,” said Zaidee, driven to the last shift of self-defence, the pale-brown of her complexion reddening into a violent crimson, and her eyes glowing through her tears. “I am a great many years older than you little children. I could surely teach you something. I do not know very much myself; but I know more than you do, and your mother thinks I can teach you. Why will you not listen to me? You are at home, and I am among strangers; why will you not let me try?”

But children who are the most tender-hearted if you take them in one mood, are the hardest of all callous lookers-on if you find them in another. They had a cruel pleasure in observing her distress; there was triumph to them in thus humbling one of the grown-up people; and though Rosie all this time longed to cry with the poor governess, a dread of her sour little sister restrained the gentle-hearted twin. They all maintained a firm front against Zaidee. Mamma, if she had seen it, could scarcely have believed in the changed behaviour of her children.

“We don’t want a governess; you s’ould go home,” cried little Sissy.

“But I cannot go home! I have no home—no one to care for me!” said Zaidee, with a cry which came from the bottom of her heart.

They were all very silent after that. It was some-

thing which the childish understanding could not fathom, and Rosie longed more and more to go to the side of Miss Francis, to comfort her, and to cry with her. They all stood somewhat guilty and sullen, looking on, with a vague sense of being great criminals, and of some one seeing them who was even a mightier observer than mamma ; but as nothing occurred to bring this compunction the length of repentance, or to lighten them of its indefinite pain, they threw the burden of this too upon Miss Francis, and were sure it was her fault, one way or another ; they disliked her the more for having been cruel to her. They were like all other tyrants and persecutors, they resented their own uneasiness upon their victim.

While Zaidee, retiring from the contest, and swallowing down as she could the hysterical sobs which she could scarcely restrain, felt in her own heart that she was entirely vanquished, and quite succumbed to her adverse fortune. This last half-hour had destroyed all hope of ever succeeding with these children. Zaidee was wise enough, through all her inexperience, to feel that the cry of desolateness which they had forced from her put an end to her superiority—her chance of ruling those rebellious spirits. They had looked on, were looking on, with curious eyes, at the passionate youthful despair which overwhelmed her ; and even though they became penitent, and offered a

voluntary submission, this attempt was still quite at an end for Zaidee. She could not be Mrs Disbrowe's governess ; she felt in her honest simple heart, that, hard as she had tried, she could be of no use to Mrs Disbrowe ; therefore Zaidee must go away.

Where, or what to do, she could not tell. Her reading and writing were of very little service to her so far, poor child, and now she must fall back upon her other capability. Once more Zaidee vainly longed for Elizabeth's or Margaret's, or Sophy's list of accomplishments ; not knowing that even flower-painting, or landscapes in water-colours, or the most exquisite embroidery, were but very slender weapons with which to assault the world and fate. As she withdrew with her flushed face, her eyes full of tears, her frame all throbbing with the tremor of excitement, into the corner where she had been labouring at Mrs Disbrowe's plain-sewing, vague plans and purposes floated before Zaidee's eyes. She knew nothing of distressed needlewomen, and had no experience to convince her that a friendless girl of fourteen was not quite the person to keep her footing among the crowds of London. She only drew a vivid picture to herself of a very poor room, and long days of silent working, full of dreams and thought ; and this was how the girl's fancy, forlorn and visionary, decided she should live.

And Lettie and Rosie, and Tommy and Sissy, and Harry and Jack, have returned to their various occupations, but with feelings very far from satisfactory. That figure sitting silent in the corner bears heavily upon the conscience of every little Disbrowe here. They are a great deal more afraid of her now than if she had been struggling with them ; and with a vague conviction that she has given up the contest, comes an equally vague penitence for their own share in the matter. Rosie takes up and lays down her spelling-book twenty times in a minute, with anxious glances at Miss Francis ; even Lettie is almost moved to ask her pardon. There never was a conquest so thoroughly unsatisfactory, or which impressed the victors so disagreeably with a feeling of defeat.

CHAPTER XII.

AN AUDIENCE.

MRS DISBROWE's pink ribbons were newly arranged, and her evening toilette completed, yet there was still a little time to spare. The children knew very well that mamma had usually a leisure half-hour before dinner in her dressing-room, and this was a famous time for hearing complaints and settling disputes. This time, however, it was not any of the children who tapped at the door, but only Nurse, looking very solemn, who craved an audience for Miss Francis. As she granted it, Mrs Disbrowe saw more than one small shadow hovering about the door of Charlotte's room. The rebellious population in the nursery were greatly concerned to know what Miss Francis had to say to mamma.

Miss Francis entered very noiselessly, with a swift sudden motion, and a dark pale face, full of thoughts and sorrows. There was no dulness in poor Zaidee's great desolation and solitude ; her sorrow was no

apathy, but the strongest life ; and there could not well have been a greater contrast than between the full matronly figure of Mrs Disbrowe, in her rich thrifty silk gown and cheerful pink ribbons, and the slight nervous form of the girl who stood before her, dressed in the plain brown girlish undress she had worn at home, and with such a flood and tumult of thought swelling in her face. So very momentous was this matter to Zaidee, and with such an earnest simplicity did her mind regard it, that Mrs Disbrowe instinctively felt it must be something much more important than a little *emeute* in the nursery of which her young governess came to apprise her now.

“Something happened again, Miss Francis?—are the children still too much for you? Sit down and tell me about it,” said Mrs Disbrowe kindly.

But Zaidee could not sit down, and scarcely waited to hear the invitation ; she was too eager in what she had herself to say.

“I will have to go away,” said Zaidee. “I only know very little. I cannot teach the children. I would try again if I could, and I thought I could when I came here ; but it is not possible any longer. I will have to go away.”

“What is the matter? Have they teased you in the nursery? But you know we must not throw aside our duties because they are hard sometimes,” said Mrs

Disbrowe, still very kindly ; “they are quite children, you know, and good children too, though they sometimes provoke a stranger ; and you are very young, and easily discouraged. You must have a little patience, and begin again.”

“I know very little myself,” said Zaidee, striking off once more in her strange inconsequent fashion, as if nothing had been said. “I only can read and write—but not very well ; and I am not good enough to teach them. I cannot cheat you ; you have been so good to me. I am not able to teach the children ; I will have to go away.”

“My poor child,” said Mrs Disbrowe, taking Zaidee’s hand, and leading her kindly to a seat, “why do you speak so very sadly about going away ? Do you know you are far too young to go out as a governess or to be away from home ? I think, perhaps, the best thing you can do is to go back again. Why do you start so, child ?”

“Because I cannot go home. I never will go home—never !” cried Zaidee. “Oh, you do not know ; I would far rather die !”

Mrs Disbrowe lifted her hand from Zaidee’s shoulder. “You are a very strange girl,” she said disapprovingly ; “it is a great blessing to have a home, even though everything there is not quite as we wish it. If your friends are not very kind to you, they are still your

friends ; and you had far better return to them. If you think they will be angry, I can write to them, and explain why it is that you return so soon."

Zaidee dried the little gush of hot tears which had surprised her eyes at the mention of home ; she rose again very quietly, and looked up with her simple wistful eyes into Mrs Disbrowe's face.

"I cannot go home," she said, with a sad steadiness, which reached again to the fountain of tender charity in her protector's heart ; "but I will have to go away, because I must never cheat any one. I would like to work at something, and be of use to somebody ; but, Mrs Disbrowe, you are very kind to me, and I am of no use to you."

Something like a tear came to Mrs Disbrowe's eye. "I do not understand you, but I am very sorry for you," she said compassionately. "Tell me, then, what you propose to do."

Zaidee looked up again, and all those envied accomplishments, those attainments of Elizabeth and Margaret and Sophy, seemed to burst upon her vision once more. "I cannot do anything," burst from Zaidee's lips in a little overflow of regret and self-reproach ; "I mean nothing but sewing ; but there is only myself, it is not much matter. I think I would live somewhere, and work. I can do a great deal of work when I try, and I would never wish to do any-

thing else now—neither reading nor—” Her breast heaved, for suddenly she thought of her long walks with Sermo ; and Sermo’s very name, a household word, overwhelmed her for the moment with such a glimpse of home. “I could work all day long,” said Zaidee, turning away abruptly to hide the falling of a great long-gathered cluster of tear-drops—a score run into one.

But Mrs Disbrowe had heart enough and wisdom enough to perceive that it was not the thought of working all day long, but some other concealed and hidden thought, which brought this heavy dew to Zaidee’s eyes. She was so kind as not to question her at the moment, but simply to address herself to the matter in hand.

“This is your plan, is it?” said Mrs Disbrowe, with a smile which had a great deal of pity in it ; “but do you know you are too young for this?—not too young either,” she continued, half to herself—“too young for evil and temptation—too young and too simple to be led away. But I will tell you what we will do. I have a great deal of sewing myself, and till that is done you must stay with me and help me. There now, dry your eyes ; you shall not go back to the nursery, but sit in the spare room—Charlotte’s room—close to my own, and do your sewing there ; and when that is all done you must consult with me again what

you are to do. Will you take my advice, my poor child?"

Zaidee looked up earnestly at the woman whom she herself had woken into a protecting angel. "You are very good to me," said Zaidee; "I will do whatever you tell me; only I cannot go home."

"Well, I will not bid you—now," said Mrs Disbrowe. "Come, you must dry your eyes and be comforted. No one must be quite miserable in my house. You can sit in the nursery this evening, and to-morrow we will have Charlotte's room made into a workroom, and something will turn up before you have done all my sewing there."

So Zaidee went away, and Mrs Disbrowe returned to her toilet for a moment, to arrange her pink ribbons once more. Though there was a softening satisfactory sentiment at her heart, this lady could not help feeling that she had acted "against her principles." She was perplexed and disturbed, and felt herself more liable to attack than she had been for many a day. It was not prudent. Her habitual thriftiness would by no means sanction this unwise liberality; but Mrs Disbrowe's heart was too much for her principles. Nature overcame and triumphed in this woman of the world. Whatever happened, she could not put the orphan child away.

In the mean time Zaidee, very weary and exhausted,

stole up-stairs to the high attic. No mystic gems of coloured light, no red cross hung over her now, as she lifted her eyes to the skylight window, half-opened, at which the November fog came in. Oh home, home, home! She threw herself upon her little bed, and covered her face from this dim damp waning daylight. This day's trial had worn to the heart of Zaidee ; but after she had lain there awhile in the gathering darkness, she was fain to steal down, half frozen, to the deserted nursery, and take refuge with the homely representative of domestic government there. Nurse had a great deal to say, as usual, and Zaidee suffered the stream to run on, now and then striking into it, when some of Nurse's maunderings crossed the current of her own thoughts. They were no interruption to each other ; for even this drowsy gossip about the Johns and the Bridgets of Nurse's youthful acquaintance had just so much human interest in it that her young companion was never tired listening. Zaidee's heart was still so young that it found interest in everything that looked like story-telling, and never complained of the minute details of Nurse's narrative. And her simple mind was worn out with much exertion, and sunk in the exhaustion of passion and excitement. She was glad to hear the humdrum cadence of this kindly voice. Its pleasant brogue and homely diction were better to Zaidee than either wit

or wisdom of a colder kind. They lulled her weariness to rest, and broke with many a little episode of a still harder and humbler youth than hers the long monologue of the girl's own thoughts. Nurse, after her kind, was a very fitting minister, and did good service. Mistress and servant were kind to the orphan. She had not found this world yet to be a very cold or cruel world.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER OCCUPATION.

IT is now two months since this young exile left the Grange, and Christmas is drawing near. Zaidee is so sincere a visionary, that, enveloped in her thoughts, she thinks little of the festive time approaching, or of the change made in herself since her last merry Christmas at home. She does not think, with dreary self-lamentation, that there is no one to brighten this time for her, as in her circumstances so many would do, but with loving and vivid realisation she thinks of how they will spend the Christmas in Cheshire, and wonders, with a longing curiosity, whether her own absence will make any difference in the family festivities. But it is of no use asking her own heart so often what has happened to them all ; it is of no use wondering and wishing as she sits within this deserted apartment, once the bower and sanctuary of Miss Charlotte Disbrowe, but now only the spare room in Bedford Place. The white hangings begin to grow

dingy ; the litter of the wedding preparations is long ago over. Near the small bit of smoky fire which the housemaid has condescended to light for Miss Francis, she sits before a great basketful of plain-sewing, exercising her vocation. Her literary attainments, her reading and writing—the latter so painfully perfected before she left the Grange—have proved quite useless to Zaidee ; and though there is one little pang of disappointment in the consciousness, she is very content to fall back upon the only other branch of knowledge she possesses. Poor Zaidee, though she speaks the pure English of a gentlewoman, is not great in moods and tenses. Imagination and romance, after all, are fully more favourable to plain-sewing than to accurate grammar ; so the girl finds it very possible to be content, and is more in her sphere, working here by herself in the spare bedroom, than struggling to teach Rosie and Lettie and Tommy and Sissy up-stairs.

It is a strange uncommunicative self-contained life which she lives in this quiet back-room, looking out upon the brick parallelograms, and strips of grass and flowers. Zaidee's brown complexion grows of a darker paleness every day. Her eyes become hollow, and her agile figure, with all its girlish angularities, is thinner and more angular still than when she came here. When Mrs Disbrowe bids her go out to take

exercise, Zaidee always would rather not ; poor child, she seeks no intermission, and wishes for no amusement. Her thoughts run on just as well, perhaps indeed somewhat better, for her hands being busy ; and no one knows what visions attend the hemming of Mrs Disbrowe's household linen,—what wild imaginations run through these noiseless days, and keep alive the young life in her heart. Mrs Disbrowe every day grows more and more perplexed, and sometimes wonders almost in terror what she is to do with this friendless girl, and makes resolutions, a hundred times broken, to insist upon the name of her relations, and to write to them, trying if it may still be possible to awake kindness in their hearts ; for this good mother can only explain Zaidee's unwillingness to go home by supposing that she has been cruelly treated by her friends, against whom, in consequence, the worthy gentlewoman, whose own tenderer feelings have so completely taken advantage of her, is proportionably indignant. Wherever Mrs Disbrowe is, it is astonishing how this problem vexes her hitherto placid mind. What is she to do with this girl ?

While Leo and Minnie, the only members of the family who yet can venture to criticise mamma, strongly backed by Mrs Edward Lancaster, who is never done wondering, cannot sufficiently express their astonishment,—What does mamma keep her for ?—what is

the good of having Miss Francis in the house?—and what has mamma to do with her?—ask these inquiring Disbrowes,—the kitchen is not less interested; and Buttons even ventures, in a quiet way, to play some practical jokes upon Miss Francis, which Miss Francis is so utterly unconscious of as to provoke to positive bile the “fun” of Mrs Disbrowe’s accomplished page. In the nursery, after a few days of very equivocal triumph, broken with many compunctions, the children at last have begun to revel in the delights of a prolonged holiday. Mamma is put to her wit’s end. She cannot have a new governess while the former one remains with her. She cannot keep Zaidee and send the children to school. Placid papa, who never interferes with anything, has actually become a terror to Mrs Disbrowe within these few weeks; since there has been something which she does not wish him to ask about, she is in continual terror lest he should inquire; for what excuse could she give him?—how account for her own conduct?—she who cannot account for it to herself.

Unconscious of all the ferment caused by her presence, Zaidee dreams on day by day in her dim chamber, consuming her heart. But for this visionary world in which she breathes and lives, the young life must have been spent and wasted long ago; and now it only lives upon its own strength and essence, devouring

its resources and itself. She is very harmless and silent in her solitude, her voice is never heard in the house, and no one is reminded, by outward intrusion, that the stranger is here. All unaware of how she embarrasses Mrs Disbrowe—unsuspicious of Minnie's malicious wondering—of Mrs Edward's comments—of all the hard inuendoes levelled at mamma on account of her—unsuspicious of the practical jokes of Buttons—the curiosity in the kitchen—the triumph of the nursery—Zaidee sits hour by hour alone, and weaves her life into her dreams. She never feels herself neglected, never is aware of any injury, nor is aware either in her girlish heedlessness that she is out of place and a burden; so much a child's mind is the mind of Zaidee, that it has room for no complication of ideas. With devotion and ardour, which is more than conscientiousness, she labours at her work, and while she does that, thinks no harm to give her thoughts full sway, and deliver up her whole being into them—and this is how she lives.

Malice and embarrassment, wonder and inquiry, would soon be at an end if this continued; for already, when Christmas is come and gone, when the Covent Garden bouquet on the drawing-room table shows its first snowdrop, and the early crocuses just thrust their green spikes through the soil of Aunt Vivian's flower-garden at home, the air grows heavy

and stagnant in the scene of Zaidee's toil. It weighs upon her, as the charmed air might have weighed upon the bewitched princess of the fairy tale, ere she sank to her sleep of centuries ; and on Zaidee, too, there begins to sink a heavy torpor—a heaviness from which only the touch of love can wake her up.

Where is this touch to come from ? Words of kindness are said to her sometimes ; she is never ill-treated. As the world goes, she has been strangely fortunate in finding such a home ; but love is not near the poor child. Curiosity and wonder all agape, and even a degree of equable interest and kindness, might have come to look at the sleeping beauty, without in the least disturbing *her* lingering slumbers ; and Zaidee is too much a child to be roused as she was. From whence is to come *her* waking kiss ?

“ Minnie, when you go to Charlotte's to-morrow, you must take Miss Francis with you ; and let your sister know that I particularly wish her to write to Mrs Green. Persuade Charlotte to write at once, and bring me the letter home with you, Minnie ; we *must* apply to her friends, and have her taken home,” says Mrs Disbrowe ; and if you look closely, you will see that Zaidee has brought a permanent wrinkle to the comely forehead of mamma. “ It is quite out of the question. We cannot go on in this way ; and yet, the poor child ! ”

"I don't call her a poor child. I think she is very well off," said saucy Minnie. "If all the people that do plain-sewing had as much for it"—

"Be silent, Minnie!" cried Mrs Disbrowe angrily, and with a glow of displeasure on her cheek. Feeling herself guilty, Mrs Disbrowe was more than usually impatient of criticism.

"And why am I to take her to Charlotte's?" continued the young lady—"in her brown frock and her straw bonnet! She is not fit to go with me."

"She is to go with you notwithstanding," said Mrs Disbrowe quickly; "and unless you change your manners, Minnie, you will never look so much like a lady as poor Miss Francis does. I wish her to go with you to-morrow. She shall not remain with us, if I can find another shelter for her; but she must not get sick and be laid up in the mean time, if I can help it."

Satisfied that she would carry this as the reason, Minnie hastened to announce her good fortune to Miss Francis. The little fire in the spare room was very smoky—the great work-basket was quite full—the air was heavy and close, yet chilled and full of the foggy haze in the atmosphere without; and beyond these cold white hangings, which looked so smoked and dingy, sat Zaidee, in her half trance of silence, working at her plain-sewing. Minnie Disbrowe, bursting in out of breath, was chilled into composure in a moment.

“ Miss Francis ! mamma says you are not to get sick, and be laid up. You are to go with me to my sister’s to-morrow.”

“ I would rather not indeed. I like best to be at home,” said Zaidee.

“ Home ! Do you call *this* home ?” cried the refined Minnie. “ I am sure, if I was you, I would far rather go back to my friends. I would do anything rather than stay here.”

A slight shudder was all Zaidee’s answer. She had a strange obtuseness in this one particular. Now that she was busily employed, and working for them, it did not occur to her that the Disbrowes, all and sundry, wished her away.

“ Well, if mamma likes—” said Minnie, shrugging her shoulders ; but even Minnie had not the heart to conclude the sentence in presence of Zaidee’s wistful dreamy face, and unfailing industry. “ You are to come with me to-morrow,” she continued, “ to do you good, I suppose. Mamma said so. You had better make your things look as well as possible, and be ready to go.”

As it was a command, Zaidee received it quietly as a necessity. She had not been in the open air for days ; but Zaidee, fresh from the Cheshire wilds, could scarcely recognise as open air the wintry fog of Bedford Place.

CHAPTER XIV.

A VISIT.

THEY set out together on the afternoon of the following day, which, as it happened, was a cheerful bracing afternoon, with a red sun, bearing down towards the stack of houses which formed “the west” to Bedford Place, and breaking up the grey haze, after a fantastic fashion, pleasant to see. Zaidee’s wandering eyes sought out this stream of ruddy light, which, with the slight fog to aid it, made these streets and squares almost picturesque, and did not perceive the mortification and displeasure of Miss Minnie, who had herself unwillingly assumed a brown frock and bonnet not a very great deal better than Zaidee’s, but pronounced by mamma “quite good enough” for a visit to Charlotte. It had been Minnie’s intention to mark the difference between her own rank and her companion’s, to the most cursory observer, by making herself very fine to-day; but, alas, that inexorable mamma! As it happened, however, Minnie’s sulki-

ness was sadly lost on Zaidee, who had not the smallest desire to be enlightened by her conversation ; and who, indeed, enveloped in her own magical atmosphere, was not at all aware that there had been nothing said between them till they arrived at Charlotte's door.

The house of Mrs Edward Lancaster was a facsimile of her mother's ; a tall house, equally commodious, equally genteel, and out of doors equally grim in its respectability ; but within, by dint of new carpets, new paper, and new gilding, liberally displayed in the shape of picture-frames, a new maid-servant, in smiles and blue ribbons (Mr Edward Lancaster having a prejudice against Buttons), and a general newness and brightness of atmosphere, this habitation looked gayer and more cheerful than the original Bedford Place. Charlotte's drawing-room was not drab either ; there were no blinds half-way down the windows. The new paper was a bewilderment of roses and myrtles, the new carpet a thicket of flowers ; and in the grate burned a riotous fire, such as would have broken Mrs Disbrowe's rest with visions of blazing chimneys, fire-engines, and fines. By-and-by, when the nursery, which at present is only an unfurnished room up-stairs, comes to be as full as the nursery at home, and when all these gay embellishments are toned down into the grey of years,

Mrs Edward Lancaster will be a thrifty housewife, as careful a manager as mamma ; but at present, at its first offset, there is a certain air of lavishness, of profusion—to tell the truth, though Mrs Edward is Mrs Disbrowe's daughter—of extravagance about the house. Mrs Edward spends a poor man's income in gloves and ribbons, there being no overseeing eye to veto the expenditure ; and the servants in the kitchen scorn to be behind their mistress ; while hosts of pretty nick-nackeries find their way, day by day, into the bright new drawing-room, to the much adornment of the same. The young master of the house begins to look with dismay at his cheque-book, and to be rather doubtful of the truth of the often-repeated declaration, that it is “only this once.” Take comfort, bridegroom ; it *is* only this once : when she has her first fit of glorious independence over, and no longer plays at housekeeping, Mrs Disbrowe's daughter will prove her parentage, and be the thriftiest wife that ever fell to the lot of man. But so far it must be conceded, there is no thrift in the new establishment, and the house has a great “way” upon it, like the young gay unconcerned mistress of the same.

Charlotte is lying back in her easy-chair, holding up her hands before her as she works at some bit of netting ; and the young lady's ample draperies spread out, and her ribbons constantly in motion, as she

moves in her chair in her careless fashion, give what a painter would call “breadth of effect” to this animated picture. Her friend Helen Maurice sits by the table near Mrs Edward, and the drawing-room door being open, you may hear those loud young ringing voices, what they say, and how they laugh, and how perfectly without restraint they are, when you are still at the foot of the stair. Also, on a showy little couch near the fire sits a very upright lady in widow’s weeds, with a large muff on her lap, and an immense boa on her shoulders. Her crape veil, put back from her face, shows you a large pale countenance, with considerable force in its lines, but, it must be confessed, at this present moment somewhat of a sour aspect. As the young ladies talk, the old lady’s blue eye sometimes kindles into grim amusement; but in general it is apparent that she is neglected, and that she feels herself so.

To this scene the two girls enter unannounced—no formal introduction being necessary to Mrs Edward’s sister, even in the punctilious judgment of the waiting-maid, who is a very new broom, and piques herself on doing her duty. As Minnie bursts in at the open door, and Zaidee, like a shadow, follows after, Charlotte raises her head to nod at them, and goes on with her conversation. Minnie, for her part, pausing to look round the room to see who is in it,

condescendingly addresses the old lady, “ How do you do, Mrs Lancaster ? ” in passing, and immediately darts upon a great china jar opposite, without giving Mrs Lancaster the trouble to answer her question.

“ Oh, Charlotte, where did you get this ? ” cried Minnie loudly. “ I don’t like it—it’s ugly ; you always had such bad taste. Why, there’s beetles on it ! I would throw it out of the window if it were mine.”

Now Charlotte had already been provoked this morning by finding her latest purchase not at all admired by Edward, and was quite disposed to bestow upon Minnie the full weight of her displeasure towards both.

“ Let my china alone, will you ? ” exclaimed Charlotte. “ You provoking little thing, what do you mean poking about into every corner ? I don’t buy my furniture to please you. Do you hear ? You shan’t do what you like in my house as you do at home.”

“ I just wish mamma heard you,” said Minnie spitefully.

It was a wish in which Mrs Edward did not concur ; for she had not the slightest desire, married lady though she was, to encounter the displeasure of mamma. The elder Mrs Lancaster looked on very grimly during this loving sisterly salutation. She

was not Edward's mother, but only his father's widow —a very kind friend to him, and counting herself to have some motherly rights, in consequence of many years' guardianship—a claim which Edward himself allowed very cordially, but which Mrs Edward had pleasure in defying. The old lady's eyes and ears were extremely vigilant when she visited her stepson's wife. It was astonishing what a clear perception she had already of all Charlotte's shortcomings, and how she overlooked her good qualities altogether. There was no love lost between these two ladies. Charlotte had a pleasure in making Mrs Lancaster feel uncomfortable and out of place in her gay new drawing-room among her young friends ; and Mrs Lancaster had a pleasure in coming to feel herself slighted and injured by the gay, foolish, extravagant wife, whose love of company and dress and careless housekeeping would ruin Edward. So the old lady sat very upright and solemn, an image of silent disapproval, on the pretty little couch made to be lounged on, and listened to their loud laughing discussions of last night's concert, of who was there, and how poor the music always was, and how one and another threatened to give them up, they were so stupid. All this was extremely edifying to old Mrs Lancaster, whose own dissipation was limited to the May meetings in Exeter Hall ; yet she came,—for human nature, whose wiles

this good lady was skilled in, was as perverse in her own breast as in another's, and her favourite aversion was Edward's wife.

Perhaps it might have been the same, in some degree, whoever Edward's wife had been ; but the present possessor of that dignity by no means thought it worth her while to conciliate. While old Mrs Lancaster sat stiffly on the couch, Charlotte reclined in the easy-chair. Charlotte was exuberant in embraces, in "dears," and "loves," to her other visitors ; all the while observing the old lady as the old lady observed her.

Zaidee, who had come into the room behind Minnie, stood by the door ; nobody yet had taken any notice of her ; she was left to find a seat and a welcome for herself ; but while she stood there, she had the fortune to catch the eye of Mrs Lancaster. Now, Zaidee was neither gay nor fair ; if, three months ago, you were held in doubt whether this brown girl was to ripen into a famous beauty, or sink into dark-complexioned homeliness, the chances were very much against the former hypothesis now. What Mrs Lancaster saw in her was a very plain girl, very plainly dressed, and still more visibly dropped by her companions than she herself was. The old lady's countenance brightened immediately ; she recognised the poor little governess, of whom she had heard Mrs Edward speak. Opposi-

tion is sometimes a marvellous incentive to benevolence, and no one could doubt that Mrs Lancaster was benevolent. She beckoned Zaidee to her, gave her a share of her sofa, and then began to question the incommunicative girl. What was curiosity at first rapidly ripened into interest. Zaidee's answers were so very brief, that they suggested question after question. She came from the country—she was an orphan—she did not wish to go home—she was not Mrs Disbrowe's governess—no, she was not good enough for that—she could only read and write a little herself, and was not able to teach the children—she did Mrs Disbrowe's sewing now, and Mrs Disbrowe was very kind to her—that was all. By the time she knew so much, Mrs Lancaster greatly wished to hear more. The old lady surely did not want Zaidee to *complain* to her; but she would have been very well satisfied to hear a few more details of Mrs Disbrowe's household, and to ascertain if this dependant was content.

“I don't think you are well, my poor child. Does Mrs Disbrowe allow you to go out?” asked Mrs Lancaster.

“I would rather not,” said Zaidee. “I do not like to be out. I always ask leave to stay at home.”

“Is it Bedford Place you call home?” said the questioner.

Zaidee looked up for an instant into her face. "I have no other home now. I am very glad to be there," said this poor child, whom nobody could persuade into believing herself ill-used. The old lady was melted ; she almost forgave Mrs Disbrowe for being the mother of Edward's wife. But she did more than that—she asked Mrs Edward to spare Miss Francis, to take an airing with her in that plain handsome brougham of hers which stood at the door. Mrs Edward opened her eyes, but had no objection. Zaidee obeyed the old lady passively, and followed her, to the consternation of Minnie. But the poor girl herself was not astonished ; in her torpor and silent heaviness, it seemed as if she could no longer do anything but obey.

CHAPTER XV.

A FRIEND.

IT was not till seated in Mrs Lancaster's brougham, with Mrs Lancaster's broad crapes pressing upon her modest brown dress, and Mrs Lancaster's furs warming the confined atmosphere of the close little carriage, which forthwith began to trundle leisurely toward the Park, that Zaidee awoke from the quiet haze in which she had answered what was asked, and done what was commanded her. It might be the widow's cap which recalled Aunt Vivian—though this tall lady, so far as bulk went, would have made two Aunt Vivians, and was very unlike the fairy godmother: or perhaps the sober opulence of Mrs Lancaster's equipage and dress reminded Zaidee, more than Bedford Place did, of the exuberant comforts of home. Whatever the cause was, she was roused into warmer life—her thoughts lay dormant for a little, her eyes took unconscious inventory of the things about her—the

torpor was shaken for the moment, and Zaidee looked forth again through the mist of her own dreams.

“And so you say Mrs Disbrowe is kind? I suppose you are very useful to her,” said Mrs Lancaster, with a “humpf!” in her own mind over the disinterestedness of Mrs Disbrowe.

“I thought I might be of use when I came,” said Zaidee, “though I know so very little; but I could not teach the children—I was not able—and that was why I got the sewing to do. No; I am not of much use; I can only sew.”

“You told me before that you knew very little,” said her new friend; “young ladies very seldom say so. Tell me what ‘very little’ means.”

“I can only read, and write—but not very well,” said Zaidee. “I cannot play, nor draw, nor do anything.”

“Except Mrs Disbrowe’s sewing,” said Mrs Lancaster, with involuntary satire.

The pale brown face beside her lighted up a little. “Yes,” said Zaidee, with a sigh of satisfaction, “that is something still; but, after all, it is only *plain* sewing. I cannot do embroidery, nor anything, like what they used to do at home.”

“And would you not rather be at home than here, among strangers?” asked Mrs Lancaster.

Zaidee started with a thrill of terror. “No, no,”

she said hurriedly, “ I cannot go home. I did not mean to speak of it again.”

“ Tell me where it was and all about it, my poor child,” said her questioner persuasively.

It was seldom that Zaidee, whose ideas were always striking off at a tangent, permitted herself to be thus brought to bay. Perceiving it, however, she was too brave to escape ; she looked up with open eyes to the old lady’s face.

“ My father and my mother are dead. My mother was a Greek, and my father was a traveller, far away. I have been alone all my life ; I have no home,” said Zaidee steadily. “ I am glad to be with Mrs Disbrowe ; I have no one to go to but her.”

“ But do you know they do not wish you to remain with them ? What will you do then ? ” asked Mrs Lancaster.

“ I will ask Mrs Disbrowe again to let me stay,” said Zaidee very simply. She was not to be reached on the side of pride.

“ My poor child,” said her new friend, whose kindness at the present moment was more in intention than effect, “ Mrs Disbrowe has a great many children : I have heard them speak of you often ; they want their mother to send you home to your friends ; they think you a burden. You would not like to feel yourself a burden, should you ? ”

Zaidee's brown face grew very pale—so pale that the well-intentioned lady beside her hastily drew her smelling-bottle from the depths of her muff. “It is not what I *like*,” said Zaidee; “I would like if God would please to let me die—but He never has heard me yet; and I am afraid it would not be right to do it of myself.”

“To do what, child?” cried Mrs Lancaster, with a little scream.

But Zaidee made no answer. She was pondering sadly in her own heart — pondering of necessity and providence, and how different what she would, was from what she *must*.

“They are very unkind, these foolish young people, for I am sure their mother has a cheap assistant in you,” said Mrs Lancaster, her dislike to the Disbrowes insensibly prevailing over her prudence. “You are a poor artless child, I can see; you would be far better away from that woman of the world.”

“Must I go away?” said Zaidee, catching the one word which chimed into her thoughts; “and if I go away, will you give me something to work at?” she continued, looking up with honest simplicity in Mrs Lancaster's face.

This good lady was somewhat taken aback by the downright sincerity of her young companion. “I—I can scarcely tell,” said Mrs Lancaster; “but that was

not what I meant ; you ought to go home to your friends."

" I thought I ought to go away at first, when I found I could not teach the children," said Zaidee, either not hearing or not heeding. " I thought I could live in a little room somewhere, and work at sewing, if any one would give it me ; but Mrs Disbrowe was kind, and said I should rather stay. Do they grudge that I am there ? I have no right to be there—perhaps, indeed, I had better go away."

And Zaidee's eyes, brightened with a new thought, travelled over the high range of buildings they were passing. Nay, these are all great houses, poor child ! ranges of lofty windows, drawing-rooms, and bed-chambers, of better fashion and higher rank than Bedford Place—not one single little nook among them where you could bring your needle, your sole capability, your forlorn young life and sincere heart. The old lady's eyes followed this gaze of futile longing ; her own mind was built with lofty regularity, something like those blank fine houses which gave forth no answer to Zaidee's mute inquiry. She loved to dispense her liberality in the legitimate channels, to ascertain that they were " deserving objects " who had alms of her abundance, to inquire all about them, if it was improvidence or evil behaviour which brought them within the range of her benefactions, if they had

seen better days, or if their poverty was native to them, or if their need was desperate enough to warrant charity. All the minutiae of their circumstances carefully inquired into, no one could be more bountiful than this well-endowed and childless widow ; but so much fortified with custom and regulation was she, that it perplexed her greatly when a “case” came before her which could not be dealt with according to rule. At present she found herself in a dilemma—of her own creating, too, which made it the more vexatious. Acting on a whim, which a woman of prudence never ought to do—acting, moreover, on other motives still farther removed from Christian charity than whims are (but these Mrs Lancaster did not specify to herself)—she had brought this child away with her, had partially enlightened her as to her own circumstances, had conceived a strong interest in her—what was to be done with her now ? Mrs Lancaster retired into the depths of her sables to consider. Zaidee, with her wistful eyes, looked out upon these great ranges of houses. The air was warm and soft in this luxurious enclosure, tinged with a faint perfume, and very different from that brown hazy sunny winter air without. The little carriage moved on at a drowsy pleasant pace. Wayfarers walking fast to keep themselves warm, children cased in furs and hosiery, little groups of juvenile vagabonds with feet and faces red

and blue with cold, disappeared from the window as they drove on. Mrs Lancaster, much vexed with her own indiscretion, and Zaidee, brightly realising that impossible independence of hers, working alone in a little chamber for some one else than Mrs Disbrowe, saw nothing of the bare trees and sodden grass—young and old, they had other things to look at than this wintry park.

The old lady has not spoken again, neither has Zaidee ; but the well-accustomed coachman has turned homewards. Now the lights are beginning to shine in the windows, and the last red ray of sunset has disappeared from the brown haze of air which gives tone and colour to these streets. They are not going to Bedford Place, but turning at this easy speed to another quarter. The chill in the air gives animation to all those passers-by upon the way ; such visions of home and fireside waiting for one and another—of the cheerful household meal ready for their coming, and the news of the great world which they carry with them to brighten the quiet, crowd about all those comfortable figures, briskly pressing forward. One has a newspaper, another a parcel of books, another only a toy swinging “at the cold finger’s end,” or a paper-bag of cakes and sweetmeats for the children. You may call them City men as you pass by in your superb idleness—never mind ; they have done their

good day's work in the City or elsewhere ; and in this pleasant darkening they see already the firelight shine in their own windows as every one goes home. School-boys with satchels making the road echo, tall school-girls swinging by in confidential couples with music-books, and an infinite quantity of secrets to tell. Here and there a shop holding out the light of its homely traffic upon the way—so many pleasant sounds in the air, voices, and footsteps—so many peaceful people on their way home.

The little carriage trundles on, and never pauses for a moment. Its rich mistress has a home, but no child to make it glad ; and as for poor Zaidee, searching the darkness with her wistful eyes, she believes there is no home for her in all this plentiful and prosperous world.

CHAPTER XVI.

PERPLEXITY.

ZAIDEE has not considered the question, whether she is going home to Mrs Disbrowe's, or elsewhere. So full of fancies is she, nothing that happened to-night would much surprise Zaidee ; and when the little carriage turns into a gate, and rounds the small curve of a semicircular plot planted thick with evergreens, to pause before a quickly-opened door, she observes vividly, but can scarcely be called curious. Mrs Lancaster, warm in her furs, alights slowly. The girl behind her feels a slight chill of cold as she glances up into a clear frosty sky, all bright with stars, before she enters Mrs Lancaster's door. Many a time that glimpse of the friendly heavens will return upon her, when she is pursuing her course among strangers ; but now it has disappeared, and there is nothing loftier visible than the ceiling of Mrs Lancaster's hall, and the staircase, on which a sober-coloured maid waits for her

mistress. Without a word, Zaidee follows Mrs Lancaster up-stairs. The stairs are softly carpeted ; there is a noiseless warmth and wealth in the house, still, and regular, and orderly — no nursery to awaken the echoes, nor “young people” to disturb this calm with intrusive activity. When Mrs Lancaster reaches the door of her own room, she commits Zaidee to the charge of her maid, who conveys her forthwith into a small humdrum comfortable apartment, where there is a fire, and tea on the table. The maid desires the young lady to seat herself till she comes back, and Zaidee is left alone to look into the cavern of the fire, and round the unfamiliar furniture, and wonder what she herself is doing here.

It is not quite dark, and the sky has not deepened into the intense blue of a winter night, but is pale and silvery all over with its young moon and early stars. Zaidee sits before the fire, wondering — almost roused into romance once more — the house is so quiet, the atmosphere so warm, the tone of wealth and comfort so apparent — quite another world from the thrifty plenty of Bedford Place, and its constant stir of young unruly life. But it is no romance after all ; for this is only a kind of housekeeper’s room, where Mrs Lancaster’s own maid has her sanctuary ; and the sober-coloured woman who re-enters anon, and tells Zaidee she is to take tea here, and that Mrs Lancaster will

send for her presently, is the trusted factotum of the lady of the house.

There is not much said between these two strangers. Mrs Lancaster's maid by no means resembles Mrs Disbrowe's Irish nurse. She too, like her mistress, requires a certificate of merit before she bestows her acquaintance ; so Zaidee's thoughts are little disturbed by conversation. It is a full hour before the summons comes for her audience, and then with gradually increasing wonder and interest she follows her conductor down stairs.

Mrs Lancaster has just dined, and there is a faint odour of the good things of the table in this large ruddy apartment, which is Mrs Lancaster's usual sitting-room. The fire burns warm with a subdued glow ; the lamp throws a tempered light upon two large easy-chairs, one on either side, where, leaning back upon easy cushions, sits Mrs Lancaster and her guest. They are both looking with some expectation towards the door, and both bend forward a little to see Zaidee as she enters, in her quick and silent fashion, with her bonnet off, and her dark hair shed back from her forehead. Mrs Lancaster, with her deep draperies of crape, and spotless widow's cap, looks somewhat imposing in her great chair ; but the old lady opposite, who has been a widow for twenty years, and is gay in flowers, and ribbons, and stiff little curls of

grey hair, with a coloured gown of rich texture, with jewels and ornaments past counting, is anything but imposing, and, with her bright cheery face, makes a very good foil to Mrs Lancaster. Poor Zaidee, being but a child, and friendless, feels her heart warm a little when she glances to the opposite side of the fireplace. Mrs Lancaster is by far the most proper and dignified—but her friend might not be flattered if she knew that Zaidee found encouragement in the smile, because it was like that of Irish Nurse, poor Zaidee's most familiar friend.

“ This is Miss Francis,” says Mrs Lancaster, as Zaidee enters. And “ Poor dear ! ” says Mrs Lancaster's friend.

“ I hear Edward's wife speak of her constantly,” pursued the lady of the house, motioning Zaidee to sit down beside her. “ It appears she came up from the country to be nursery governess to these rude little children, and did not succeed—no wonder !—so they have made a sewing-maid of the poor child. I have no doubt Mrs Disbrowe finds her very useful, but the young people think her in the way. She would like some one to give her sewing to do ; but she is much too young to live alone, so I wish very much to persuade her to go home to her friends.”

“ Has she any friends, then ? How thin she is, poor dear ! ” said Mrs Burtonshaw, Mrs Lancaster's

guest, touching Zaidee's angular arm and stooping shoulders, by way of investigation.

"Well, she has neither father nor mother, but some friends, of course. I feel quite responsible," said Mrs Lancaster uneasily. "I brought her from Mrs Edward's to give her a drive, but we got into conversation by the way. I was interested, and she came here with me. Now I really am at a loss. I cannot tell what to do. The child seems somehow thrown on my hands."

To all this Zaidee listened, as they seemed to intend she should listen, as quietly as if they had been talking of a piece of furniture, and not of a piece of sensitive human nature, warm with girlish susceptibility. At this point, however, Zaidee's dormant pride was roused. She turned round.

"Mrs Disbrowe never said I was to leave her," said Zaidee. "She did not tell me she found me a burden. I am of no use to any one but her. If you please I will go home."

"Should you like to go abroad, my dear?" asked Mrs Burtonshaw, striking in rapidly before her weightier friend, astonished by the sudden movement of the "subject" under her hands, could find words to answer.

A glow of colour rose upon Zaidee's face. "Yes," she said very eagerly. The question filled her with

such a flush of sudden excitement that she could answer no more.

“ Should you like to be companion to a good little girl of your own age? A dear little girl, my love,” cried Mrs Burtonshaw, warming rapidly; “ one who will never take any airs upon her, but love you like a sister, if you are good—to be educated with her, and have everything the same as she has—a dear pretty little angel, the sweetest child that ever was born! Will you go and be a companion to her, and make her a happier child, my love? ”

The old lady spoke so warmly and quickly, that “ therewithal the water stood in her eyes.” To all this Zaidee answered by a long wistful look. “ If any one would take me abroad, I should be very, very glad,” she said, when she turned her eyes from Mrs Burtonshaw; but she did not know how to reply to this, about being a companion, and making happy—it was not in Zaidee’s way.

“ She is the very person,” cried Mrs Lancaster, in a voice of great relief. Once put in the way of mortifying the Disbrowes, and especially “ Edward’s wife,” by the exaltation of Zaidee, Mrs Lancaster was quite herself again. “ She will do admirably; that is, if we can be satisfied about her friends.”

“ My dear,” said Mrs Burtonshaw, “ are you sure you would like to go with me? It is a long way off

—a place where there are scarcely any English, and the family travel about a great deal ; but Mary is the sweetest little love. My darling child, she will make you so happy ! ”

Zaidee looked up with sudden wonder. She thought of Mrs Wyburgh and of Nurse, who alone had called her “ darling ” before ; but it was all to be put to the account of the unknown Mary, this burst of affection for the girl who might be her companion. Her wistful dark eyes began to smile upon the old lady ; it was almost the first time they had been moved with this gentle relaxation since she came from home. Involuntarily Zaidee, who had learned the lessons of respect and humility becoming a dependant only very slightly, and who underneath had all the simple trustfulness of a child, came to Mrs Burtonshaw’s footstool, and sat down there. “ Will you tell me about Mary ? ” said Zaidee, looking up with all her old eagerness for a story. She did not hear that Mrs Lancaster suggested “ Miss Cumberland.” Zaidee knew nothing of Miss Cumberland ; she wanted to hear of this unknown girl, who was held in so much love.

And thus it was that Zaidee’s heart awoke to the clear light of common life again.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DAWNING.

IT was not the touch of Love—no, another spell had broken the charmed sleep of Zaidee Vivian—the thrill of young awaking life. Kindness had taken her hand again—love was as far from her as ever ; but the warm rejoicing youth within her, and all the half-developed powers which would have scope, awakened Zaidee. She shook her torpor off from her, and received a world of storied scenes into her heart instead. She was of the age when the simplest tale or legend populates with charmed figures the common earth. “Abroad” was a vast world of romance and adventure to her fancy—a world in which she could lose herself—in which no one from home could ever find her again. “It will be as good as if I died,” said Zaidee to herself as she prepared to go home to Mrs Disbrowe’s again.

Mrs Lancaster’s coachman, a useful man-of-all-work, trudged by Zaidee’s side through those lighted streets,

the aspect of which filled her with unusual interest. Secure in the darkness, in her new prospects, and lastly, in this protector, she went along, feeling vaguely exhilarated, she could not tell why, by the bright lights, the cold fresh air, the little crowd of people in the way. Her former terror of meeting some one who knew her, deserted her to-night. They walked at a good pace, but not because Zaidee was in haste,—she enjoyed looking into the glow of light and depth of darkness, watching all those figures cross and recross the illuminated pavement, and was sorry when they came to the dark sombre squares, with their silent enclosures and spectral trees, which surrounded Bedford Place, and when her escort knocked the knock which belonged to his lady's dignity rather than to hers, at Mrs Disbrowe's door. The mistress of the house herself came out to the hall when she heard it was Miss Francis, and with much astonishment received the message with which Mrs Lancaster's factotum was charged. His mistress would wait upon her next day concerning the young lady, the man said. Mrs Disbrowe could not imagine what concern Mrs Lancaster had with the young lady, and was disposed to be offended—as, indeed, if she had but known, she had good cause.

Zaidee stood in the hall with her bonnet loosed, her little brown cloak hanging from her shoulders,

and a colour on her brown cheek such as Mrs Disbrowe has scarcely seen there before. But the temper of mamma was ruffled. Perhaps this girl, who had caused her so much perplexity, had been complaining to Mrs Lancaster—perhaps indignant benevolence was coming in the brougham to-morrow, to upbraid her for not being sufficiently tender to Miss Francis—Miss Francis, who had subjected her to so many discomforts, the reproach of her own conscience, the impertinencies of Minnie and Leo, the dread of inoffensive Mr Disbrowe, who respected her like the Constitution. This was too much for Mrs Disbrowe ; she went forward impatiently to Zaidee, and reproved her for being so long away. “My own children would ask leave first before they went with any one, Miss Francis,” said Mrs Disbrowe with indignation ; while Minnie, within cover of the dining-room door, for malicious satisfaction and good pleasure, had almost laughed aloud.

“The lady did not ask *me* to go—she asked Mrs Edward Lancaster, and so I went,” said Zaidee. “She is coming to-morrow, because she has a friend who wants some one to go abroad. It is not to teach,” said Zaidee hurriedly, and with a blush, “or I should not be able ; but the lady comes to ask you if I am to go.”

“Should you like to go ?” asked Mrs Disbrowe,

from whose mind Zaidee's words had lifted a mountain of annoyance and discomfort—since a way in which this unnecessary inmate could be removed from her house, without positive injury to the friendless child, was a good for which Mrs Disbrowe scarcely ventured to hope.

“Yes—to go far away,” said Zaidee, and her eyes repeated the “far away” with the long wistful look they gave. “It will be almost as good as to die.”

These words reached Mrs Disbrowe's ear, low though they were spoken. Her heart smote her for her harshness, and even for her satisfaction in hearing that Zaidee was to go away. She laid her hand kindly upon the girl's shoulder. “I hope some one will go with you who can take care of you, my dear,” said Mrs Disbrowe. “I shall be very glad of anything that is for your good ; and you must write and tell your friends. Now, good-night.”

The eyes were moist which met her shining eyes as she turned to go up-stairs. The voice was kind that said that good-night to her ; and another world was before Zaidee. “It will be almost as good as to die,” she repeated to herself as she lay down on her little bed. That was a dreary consolation ; but her sleep was rich with the dreams of youth, and her fancy had already gone forth and possessed the new land.

Next day, accordingly, Mrs Lancaster's brougham

drew up at Mrs Disbrowe's door. It *was* in some sort indignant Benevolence in deep crape and expensive furs which issued from the luxurious little carriage. Mrs Disbrowe had found Zaidee very useful, Mrs Lancaster did not doubt, and the elder lady, who was of the class somewhat contemptuously called "good" by Mrs Disbrowe's "set," and by whom, in her turn, Mrs Disbrowe and her set were emphatically condemned as "worldly," would not believe in the tender charity which lay, often dormant, but always within reach, at the bottom of Mrs Disbrowe's heart. The one of these good women could not, and would not, do justice to the other ; and they met under circumstances which confirmed their natural opposition.

"No ; she was quite right ; she could not teach the children ; she is herself not much more than a child," said Mrs Disbrowe ; "they wanted some one to be firm with them, as their sister was. I find it difficult to get any one who can manage the children as Charlotte used to do."

Mrs Lancaster slightly elevated her eyebrows, and said, "Edward's wife !" in her own mind, with the conviction that these three syllables conveyed all the contempt that it was possible to express in words ; but Mrs Lancaster politely inclined her head, and kept silence in presence of mamma.

"But there is no harm in her," said Mrs Disbrowe

warmly. "These may seem strange words, but I mean she is an innocent child—I believe as truthful and simple-hearted as ever girl was; and that is almost all I know of Miss Francis. She was sent to us by a clergyman's wife, a schoolfellow of Charlotte's. *Her* recommendation was enough for us; and we inquired no further; but I think she must have had an uncomfortable home—she was so unwilling to return."

"And you know nothing of her friends!" said Mrs Lancaster, opening her eyes. "I felt so sure, a prudent mother, bringing a young person into her family, would be certain to know. I am very sorry; for I fear we must be assured of their respectability before I can decide anything with my friend."

"How unfortunate!" said Mrs Disbrowe. "Well, then, we must have patience, and wait for something else, I suppose, for I have told you all I know."

Whereupon Mrs Lancaster drew back, and lost ground; and the issue was, that mamma, who never lost her temper, came off victor, and left the benevolent indignation worsted on the field, and a little ashamed of itself. "I know no ill of this woman," Mrs Lancaster acknowledged to herself, as she followed Mrs Disbrowe's floating pink ribbons up another flight of steps to Zaidee's workroom. "Why should I suspect her? I believe, after all, she has been very kind to this poor child."

Further conversation followed after this change of scene, and the old lady was still further convinced, against her will, that there was good in the mother of Edward's wife. "It would be hard, certainly, if we were to be made responsible for the sins of our children. Providence lays the burden quite the other way," said Mrs Lancaster to herself, as she descended to her carriage, and bowed a gracious bow of farewell to Mrs Disbrowe. Zaidee was still to remain a few days at Bedford Place. Mrs Lancaster's friend was just about starting on her long foreign journey, and this careful lady carefully impressed upon Zaidee the necessity of looking over her wardrobe, and having everything carefully packed; for plentiful Mrs Lancaster had no conception of a wardrobe which could be tied into a napkin and carried in its proprietor's arms.

"So you're to leave us, honey?" said Nurse, with a tear in the corner of her eye. "It's me that's sorry for meself, but thankful for you; for sure the like of you was never fit to fight with them children. But many a day I'll miss your quiet ways, and think upon you in foreign parts. Sure, then, I make no doubt it's for the good of your soul; for they're all good Catholics there."

"Well, I declare, Miss Francis is going away! Is she going to live with that dreadful old Mrs Lancaster,

mamma?" cried the amiable Minnie. "I am so glad she is not to bother us any more."

The nursery and the kitchen had their opinions on the same subject ; but Zaidee never suspected them, and was quite unconscious. Her eyes shone with their old glow already, and her heart rose to its new life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FAREWELL.

IT was indisputable that the house of Disbrowe was very glad to be rid of Zaidee. The brow of mamma was cleared of its wrinkle, and the children rejoiced in riotous expectation of being sent to school. The workroom of Miss Francis was visited now and then by investigating expeditions, to see how she was satisfied, and to prove to her how much *they* were. Mrs Disbrowe said, with compunction, that she trusted Mrs Lancaster's friend would be kind to the poor child; but that really it was not her place to interfere, if Miss Francis herself was satisfied, and she hoped she had written to her friends. Miss Francis was very well satisfied. She had created a future for herself already, and was on the most loving confidential terms with that distant Mary, who was the sweetest child that ever was born. Vague visions of a wide country full of rivers and of mountains came to Zaidee's mind, and her heart beat to think upon the rough friendly

familiar wind, and all the cloudy glory of the broad heavens, from which she had been exiled here. The very idea of travel was a strange and new delight to her, and with it came again the sad comfort, that this far-away journey was almost as good as if she had died. “Neither Philip, nor Percy, nor Captain Bernard, could find me now,” said Zaidee, shedding a few tears over that treasured newspaper, as she put it up with her father’s Bible ; and afterwards it was so easy to pack her small wardrobe. A cab stood at the door to carry her away in solitary state to that dowager house at the Regent’s Park, where Mrs Lancaster and Mrs Lancaster’s friend awaited her. Lettie and Rosie were peeping from the top of the nursery stairs ; Nurse was waiting with her apron at her eyes ; Mrs Disbrowe stood at the drawing-room door to say farewell ; and Buttons hovered in the hall below ;—all to hail the exit of Miss Francis—her defeat and failure in her first wrestle with her fate.

“The blessing of God go with you, honey !” said Nurse, wiping her eyes with her apron. “I shall always be glad to hear of your welfare,” said Mrs Disbrowe, shaking Zaidee’s hand. Then she got into the dingy cab, and the door was closed upon her, with a noise which made her start. The door was closed also in Bedford Place. “The long unlovely street” glided away past her, as her vehicle rattled over the

stones. Zaidee looked out wistfully upon the long line of doors and windows, all closed and cold, and turned in again upon herself and her small possessions, setting forth once more alone. Then the tears came one after another, and dropped upon her hands. She could not tell what it was she wept for ; but her heart was full, and overflowed.

She was setting forth again upon the unknown world ; but Zaidee was fearless as only a child can be. No phantoms rose across her open way, and heaven was clear above it—always present, always near at hand to be appealed to. It was only a vague forlornness and solitude which brought those tears to her eyes ; she went forth in simple sincerity, without a fear.

To make her reception all the more solemn, Mrs Lancaster had appointed it to be in her great drawing-room, where all the chairs were in pinafores. Mrs Burtonshaw had already packed up her jewellery, and looked all the better for it, as she sat in a plain cap and a warm morning-dress by the side of the fire. There were a great many parcels about the room ; parcels of books, marked “for my dearest Mary ;” and softer parcels, fresh from luxurious shops of silk-mercery, “for my sister,” “for Mr Cumberland,” and “for my dearest Mary” again. If these were all presents, Mrs Burtonshaw was a visitor worth having. Mrs Lancaster sat at a table writing the name of that

same dearest Mary, "with the best regards of J. L." in a book of good advice for young ladies, very richly bound, and gay to look at, though of weight enough to break down the understanding of any unwary young lady deluded into making acquaintance with the contents within. Zaidee and her "wardrobe," which, in the little box Mrs Disbrowe had given her, Mrs Lancaster's factotum carried in one hand contemptuously, were first taken up-stairs to a little room, close to Mrs Burtonshaw's, which was Miss Francis's room for the night. Mrs Lancaster's maid stood and looked on while Zaidee took off her little brown cloak and bonnet, and then, with rather more authority than respect, intimated that the young lady was sent for to the drawing-room, and ushered her upon this scene of preparation. Mrs Lancaster looked up from her writing to say "how do you do?" and Mrs Burtonshaw held out her hand to Zaidee. The girl's immediate interest in that dearest distant Mary had won Mrs Burtonshaw's heart.

"Well, dear, are you ready? We start to-morrow," said this brisk little lady, who was carefully coating a pretty writing-case with cover after cover of silver paper. "I must see your things, you know, if they are suitable; and you will want a great many wraps for the journey; it will take us more than a week to

get there. By the by, you have never told me your Christian name?"

The blood rushed to Zaidee Vivian's face in a glow of shame. She said, "Elizabeth," in a faltering undertone. It was true she had been called Elizabeth as well as Zaidee at her baptism; but it concerned her honour that she was thus obliged to disown her own proper name.

"Elizabeth? I am so very glad it is a common name," said Mrs Burtonshaw. "My sister is very anxious to call Mary, Maria; but she will not have it; and I am sure if your name had been Augusta or Laura, or any of these, the dear child would not have liked you half so well. Elizabeth? Well, to be sure! Do you know I am called Elizabeth myself?"

Zaidee looked up at her, believing that this must surely have been the reason why her heart warmed to the old lady; for everything must be good and lovable which bore her beautiful cousin's name.

"Do you think it is a pretty name?" asked simple Mrs Burtonshaw.

"I think it is like a princess," said Zaidee; for Zaidee was thinking of Elizabeth Vivian, and not of the old lady by her side.

"Well, to be sure! Mary always says she is a matter-of-fact girl. She has no poetry about her; but that is because my sister always bores the dear

child with poetry. You must not think I am ignorant what a very superior woman Mrs Cumberland is, Miss Francis," continued Mrs Burtonshaw, correcting herself, and looking dignified ; " but I really do believe, though I am only her aunt, my dear love takes more after me than her mamma, and I cannot say I had ever much head for poetry. Mary has. I believe, if she only turned her attention to it, she might do almost anything ; but she has such plain tastes, just like me. My dear, are you fond of poetry ? "

" Yes," said Zaidee, in whose estimation Mary fell immensely after this speech of her aunt's.

" Indeed ! Well, I am sure, Mary will like you, whether or not," said Mrs Burtonshaw, with a momentary hesitation. " I daresay you don't know so much about it as her mamma does ; and I think, my dear, if I were you, I would not say any verses to her. She never liked it. I would not, if I were you."

" I never say verses—except to myself," said Zaidee, feeling a little wounded in a tender point.

" Ah, that is right !" said the relieved Mrs Burtonshaw. " You will get on very well together, I am sure. I am taking a great many books to Mary, you see, my dear ; and Mrs Lancaster is sending her one—a very good one. She is a dear sensible child ; she loves good books."

Now, Zaidee, with her wild imagination, could not

be said to love good books ; but, nevertheless, had read them in emergencies, when nothing else was to be had ; so she looked with interest at the rich Russia cover, brave with much gilding, and was disposed to think that Mary must be a most fortunate girl.

“ I have something to say to Miss Francis,” said Mrs Lancaster, rising. “ Mrs Disbrowe of course had no right either to object or to sanction ; but it is a serious thing going abroad. I should like to communicate with your friends.”

Zaidee made no answer. She never even raised her eyes—and it was only by the deep colour rushing to her face that it was apparent she had heard the question.

“ Were they unkind to you, my dear ? Is that why you are so unwilling to have them spoken of ? ” asked kind Mrs Burtonshaw.

“ They were very kind to me,” said Zaidee, hurriedly ; “ so kind that I never knew I was a burden to them, till—till I found it out ; and now they would rather keep me than let me labour for myself ;—that is why they must not be told ; for I will never be a burden on them again.”

Mrs Lancaster put down her pen, and considered. “ Well, that *is* a reason,” said Mrs Lancaster. “ Come here, my child, and tell me their name, and all about them ; and I will promise not to write.”

But Zaidee was not to be persuaded. The two ladies could get nothing from her but a repetition of what she had already said. Mrs Burtonshaw, if she had no head for poetry, had a feminine respect for a mystery. "She will tell me, I daresay, when we are by ourselves," said the good lady, with innocent complacency. And Zaidee was vexed with no more questions that night.

CHAPTER XIX.

GOING AWAY.

THE next morning Zaidee assisted at the packing of a great many trunks and cases laden with the aforesaid presents, and with the personal possessions of Mrs Burtonshaw, and had her own little box wondered over and commented on, to her small satisfaction. But Zaidee forgot all these minor mortifications, when the next morning, with many farewells and God bless you's, herself and her patroness drove off from the door of Mrs Lancaster. "I will never see you again, my dear ; my health is not what it used to be," said the one old lady to the other. "We are getting old ; but for all that I hope to come back to you yet," answered the cheery voice of Mrs Burtonshaw ; but Zaidee saw Mrs Lancaster shake her head as she stood with her cloak wrapped about her in the threshold of her own door.

Zaidee herself was carefully wrapped up in the shawls and mantles of her kind companion ; and there followed after that six days of dreamy enjoyment, such as she had never known before. She felt none

of the discomforts which Mrs Burtonshaw complained of. Those rumbling diligences, rattling along through unknown countries, where every peasant, waiting on the roadside to see the coach go by, was like a figure in a picture to the fresh-hearted child—those famous rivers, which she bowed to meet, as if great personages were presented to her—those old quaint towns, whose gleaming lights it was so pleasant to see, when out of the still night roads the travellers dashed in upon their echoing stones—everything was full of delight to Zaidee. Her young frame and open heart threw off the weariness and annoyances of the journey. The novelty and difference from all she had known before did not jar upon fixed habits in her case, but were so many additional pleasures ; and Zaidee leaned back in a corner of the malleposte, or sat on a bench in the river steamer, silent, looking out of herself with those dark gleaming eyes of hers, not aware that she was travelling, but only aware of the noble panorama which glided past her, hill after hill, and town on town. She was too much absorbed to have time for talking, but fortunately it was not difficult to listen to Mrs Burtonshaw while she gazed on everything around her. So Mrs Burtonshaw, finding so good a listener, was led to tell Zaidee a great deal of her family history, and had not yet got the slightest hint of the young stranger's secret in return.”

“My sister Maria Anna and I were married about the same time, my dear,” said Mrs Burtonshaw, as they jolted along over German high-roads, up and down, with a team of four straggling horses, and a postilion in blue and silver. The *interieur* of the diligence contained two other passengers, but they were wrapped in the deafness of their Germanity, and knew no English. “My good Mr Burtonshaw was a great deal older than I was, and died many years ago. My son was just born then, and his father only lived long enough to give him his name. Some people think it an odd name,” continued the good lady ; “to me it is a very pretty one. He is called Sylvester, my dear. He was the most beautiful baby you ever saw, and now he is a very fine young man. Everybody admires my Sylvo. He is a student at Stuttgart, which is not very far from where we are going. You shall see him by-and-by ; and I think if I could see Sylvo married to Mary Cumberland, I should be quite willing to die.”

Zaidee, who knew neither Sylvo nor Mary Cumberland, withdrew her eyes for a moment from those mangel-wurzel fields. This sort of story-telling was of the greatest interest to her. By way of testifying her attention, she raised her shining animated eyes to the narrator’s face.

“And Maria Anna married Mr Cumberland,” con-

tinued Mrs Burtonshaw. “ She was always the cleverest, my dear ; but when we were both young, I looked better than she did. People used to say ‘ the clever one ’ and ‘ the pretty one,’ when they wanted to distinguish us—we were the two Misses Essex then—from each other. Mr Cumberland is rich, but he has a great many fancies—and I cannot say that Maria Anna is quite free of them herself ; so, first and last they have been a very changeable household, I can tell you, which makes it all the greater wonder that my dear love, Mary, should be such a sensible child. Mr Cumberland is a *very* troublesome man. He does not hold by his principles, you see, my dear. He is always adopting a new system, and does the strangest things sometimes. He sold his place in the country—a very handsome place, in a beautiful quarter—and went and bought a cottage in Wales, for some fancy he took—that we ought to follow Nature ; and there I found my sweet Mary with chopped hands and pattens, trudging about a little farm-yard after a Welsh dairy-maid—feeding poultry, and doing all sorts of things—and Maria Anna actually giving in to him, and praising Nature to the skies, though I never heard that *she* milked the cow. Well, that would not do ; and then Mr Cumberland became very much disgusted with the Celts, and vowed there was neither industry, nor honesty, nor one thing nor another, except among

the Saxons ; so what did he do but start off post-haste for Germany, to live among the true Teutonic race, as he called it. They have been living here a whole year, in a little out-of-the-way town ; and as it is three months since I left them, I cannot tell what new order of things there may be now. I don't *live* with them, you know, my dear, but I do love to see Sylvo with his cousin, and I spend most of my time beside her. Maria Anna has got a great deal of non — I mean she has some new ideas about education, and plagued me sadly to bring out a young lady to be a companion to Mary. I never should have thought of it but for you ; and Mary will be so glad to have you with her, I am sure."

It did not strike simple Zaidee that, in the frequent repetition of this certainty, there was a lurking doubt of *not* being quite sure that Mary would be glad of her companion. Mrs Burtonshaw, indeed, grew rather uneasy and anxious this afternoon, as the short day darkened, and the night fell upon their journey ; and once or twice speculated uncomfortably of how she could dispose of Zaidee, should this unfortunate doubt come true. In the mean time their cumbrous vehicle rolled on through the darkness—the long loose traces of the horses, the whip and the shouts of the postilion, making a great din in the noiseless country and quiet night. Zaidee leaned back in her corner, and with a

meditative pleasure looked out upon the trees growing less and less visible in the twilight, and anon standing out black against the silvery light when the moon rose. Then the coach lumbered over a wooden bridge, and there was a clear glimmer of water, broad and calm—an inland stream, with a strong current and bare banks of marshy grass. Mrs Burtonshaw, who had been dozing, woke up, and looked out. "That is the Danube, my love," said Mrs Burtonshaw; "we will soon be there." The Danube! Zaidee started, and looked back; but, after all, it was only a glimmer of water shining under the moon. Then there came another long course through these rugged roads, where the trees threw up their black shadows against the moonlight, and Zaidee, in her musing girlish reverie, had almost crossed the line which divides waking dreams from the dreams of sleep. She was roused by the hand of her companion straightening the edge of her bonnet and folding back her mantle. "We shall soon be there," said Mrs Burtonshaw, nervously, arranging Zaidee's dress as if she were a child. "Are you very tired? Now, that is right, you look quite bright again, and we are very near home."

First a few straggling lights, then a great old heavy gateway opening upon a narrow street of antique houses with sharp gables, and a great slope of roof,

and then with a great dash and noise into a stony market-place, the Platz of the free city of Ulm. Zaidee could see, at every turn they took, a great dark tower looming over the houses, and just as near at one point as at another ; but now her wandering attention was recalled by the lights close at hand, flashing into the carriage, by German kinsfolk waving salutations to the German travellers in the *interieur*, and by a bronzed English face, young and plentifully decorated with beard, smiling a broad welcome to Mrs Burtonshaw. “ That is my Sylvo ! there is the carriage to take us home ! ” cries the old lady, her anxiety disappearing in joyful excitement ; and the next moment Zaidee, in amaze, is hurriedly handed out upon the rough stony pavement, and the journey is at an end.

CHAPTER XX.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

“A YOUNG lady, Sylvo, to be brought up with Mary. How is my dear child ?” said Mrs Burtonshaw, as her son’s astonished glance fell upon Zaidee. Zaidee—somewhat benumbed with fatigue and cold, confused by the sudden descent from the coach, dazzled by the lights, and a little nervous, in expectation of this first appearance among the strangers who were henceforth to be her guardians—was standing apart by herself, looking at the vast shadow of the Domkirche, which was visible here as everywhere else, but conscious of the inquiring looks of Sylvester Burtonshaw, and very conscious that she was alone—alone ! The word seemed to have double significance in this strange foreign place, where everything was novel which she looked at, and everything was unintelligible that she heard.

“Get in, mother. I’ll look after the boxes,” was the brief response of Sylvester ; and Zaidee was

hurried after Mrs Burtonshaw into a strange musty vehicle, which forthwith began to rumble out of the Platz, and through one of the narrow lines of street which opened from it. With a great jar and clank, as of rusty iron, they rolled along through the darkness, where Zaidee could hear the voice of Mrs Burtonshaw, running on in a perpetual stream of question, but could see neither mother nor son. After passing under another great gateway, the carriage came to an abrupt halt. A door was thrown open, and Sylvester Burtonshaw leaped out of the vehicle, and his mother cried out for Mary, and exclaimed how thankful she was to be at home.

And the forlorn Zaidee, for whom there was no welcome, followed into a long lofty apartment, with closed folding-doors on either side of it, and a stove at the further end, through the little open door of which there shone an intense glow of red, like a furnace. This great room was covered with matting, and furnished with chill formal lines of furniture, cold marble tables, and gilded chairs, which seemed only made to range themselves against that long white line of wall. Before the stove, however, was spread a large fringed square of Turkey carpet, on which stood a round table hospitably furnished, and a variety of easy chairs and footstools, well-polished glimmering wood, and ruddy silken damask, lighted up with a good-sized lamp on

the table, and the red glow from the fire. As she still stood apart by herself, half-way down the long apartment, nobody bestowing yet any notice upon her loneliness, Zaidee's dazzled eyes sought eagerly for Mary, the sweetest child that ever was born ;—a fair-haired girl, with that pure white-and-red complexion which is so distinctly English—with thick curls hanging on her pretty white neck—with blue eyes, and a stout well-proportioned figure, who is at present busily employed in disrobing Mrs Burtonshaw. Is that Mary ? But, alas ! if appearances are true, it never can be Zaidee Vivian's confidential friend. The pale lady behind, who has gone back already to her chair, and who has a book laid open upon her knee, whose hair is arranged after a classic fashion, and who has no cap to keep warm those poor thin cheeks of hers, is, without doubt, Maria Anna, Mrs Burtonshaw's sister ; and there is Mr Cumberland, shrugging his thin shoulders, looking about him with eyes full of curiosity, and the impatience of a garrulous nature. Sylvester Burtonshaw, six feet high, bronzed and bearded, and his very little mother, who cannot deny herself gay ribbons even in this wintry journey, make up the party. Everybody is asking questions, no one answering ; and Zaidee, half-way down the room, with her cold hand upon the colder marble of a little side-table, stands motionless like a cloud or a shadow,

throwing out upon them the light of those gleaming restless eyes.

When she is remembered and introduced, she is received with considerable kindness, but a good deal of surprise ; and it is very soon suggested that Miss Francis, after her long journey, will be glad to go to rest. Miss Francis is very glad to go to rest, and to leave this great room, with its one warm point of light, and its family party, for the little closet within Mrs Burtonshaw's bedroom, where they say she is to sleep. There is a fire in the stove in Mrs Burtonshaw's room, which, nevertheless, looks very large and cold, with its little bed innocent of curtains ; and Zaidee has to ascend a few steps to reach the little chamber in the wall appropriated to herself. The little room proves, however, to be more a chamber in the roof than in the wall, and is lighted by one of those strange little attic windows, of which there are ever so many in the long deep slope of the roof. Looking out from it after the unintelligible German maid has disappeared with her little tray, the stranger turns her wistful eyes towards the friendly stars, which look down upon her with compassion—the only eyes in all this strange country that have seen her face before—and weeps a few tears to herself, silently remembering how the Bible speaks of “a stranger and a sojourner.” Turning her head a little as she

weeps, Zaidee is suddenly awed into composure by that great shadow rising upon the sky—the shadow everywhere near at hand, and present in the little circle of this town—the great stately cathedral tower. The tears dry of their own accord in her eyes, and she looks with a silent reverence upon that vast blue sky, and this great hoary presence rising into it—an old, old silent worshipper of Him who made heaven and earth ; and so, very quiet, and with a hush of awe and wonder upon her, Zaidee Vivian says her prayers—the prayers of a child—and goes to sleep.

In the mean time Mary Cumberland, with whom awe and reverence are unknown emotions, has followed Zaidee, with eyes in which good-humour is mingled with some derision ; and while her father abounds in inquiries, Who is she ?—where did you find her ?—and Mrs Cumberland exclaims, “ Do tell me ; I am sure that child has a story”—Mary, not scrupling to interrupt both, asks, “ Did you bring her for me, Aunt Elizabeth ? What am I to do with a companion ? I get on very well without one. Was it for what mamma calls my studies ? But I shall take care I have all that is necessary, aunt. And what am I to do with this girl ?”

“ On the contrary, I am much obliged to you, Elizabeth,” says Mrs Cumberland. “ I can see this is a dear little enthusiast by her eyes ; and now I shall

be able to carry out my ideas. Where did you find her, dear?"

"Brought any news with you, sister Elizabeth?" asked the fidgety papa. "What do you say to the great revolution which has taken place in the economics of the country since you left us? No such bills of mortality in England now, I promise you. Not quite to your taste, eh, sister Burtonshaw? Sylvo, there, the great beef-eating rascal, won't hear of it. Ay, we'll see you all out, the whole unnatural race of you. We live by the pure regulation of nature now, Maria Anna and I."

"It suits my constitution," said the lady, languidly. "How can anything delicate, anything ethereal, survive in connection with the gross eating and drinking we have all been used to? With roots, and fruits, and pure water, what could any one desire more?"

The amazed stranger turned wonderingly from one to another. "I don't understand you, Mr Cumberland. What *can* you mean, Maria Anna? There's no revolution in England. What are the children laughing at? I can't understand what you all mean."

"England is a conservative country, and slow to adopt improvements," said Mr Cumberland pompously. "We must come in the might of experience, the infallible demonstration of health and length of days. I am thankful to say, sister Burtonshaw, that

there have always been some Englishmen before their age. Whatever you may have seen in our benighted country, you will find nothing suggestive of the genus *carnivora* in this humble house of mine."

"Don't touch the pie, Aunt Elizabeth—don't!" cried Mary; while Aunt Elizabeth, knife and fork in hand, looked round her in dismay.

"What do you all mean?" cried the hungry traveller, faltering. "Is it not a pigeon-pie, then? Why must I not touch it, Mary? and what is Sylvo laughing at? and what in the world do you all mean?"

"Let me assist you, my dear sister. I have the warmest satisfaction in offering this wholesome fare to you," said the philosophical head of the house. "So many sanguinary meals have been discussed at my table; but we will make amends—we will make amends."

With anything but the full and generous confidence with which she would have received it, had it been the pigeon-pie which her well-appetised imagination expected, Mrs Burtonshaw jealously inspected the contents of her plate. "It's potatoes," cried Mrs Burtonshaw, turning it over doubtfully with her fork. Then there was a pause. "It's turnips!" said the good lady in a somewhat louder tone. Another pause. "There's cabbage, I declare!" cried the excited traveller. Then, after a solemn interval, "It's a mess!"

said Mrs Burtonshaw indignantly, and pushed her plate away.

Mr Cumberland commenced a little lecture in exposition of his new principles. Mrs Cumberland lamented that people should waste their emotions on such a thing as a dinner. The young people laughed ; but Mrs Burtonshaw's indignation was not to be put down so easily. "I have borne a great deal," said the good lady, emphatically, rising from her chair. "I've put up with all your freaks and your fancies, and never said a word to them ; but I don't intend to put up with this. Thank Providence, there's the Kron-prinzen left ! Call that poor girl, Sylvo—I won't have her starved either—and come and see to your mother's comfort, you great unfeeling boy !"

Yes, the new system was too refined for Mrs Burtonshaw. Mr Cumberland, with a groan, saw a succession of little trays arriving from the kitchen, containing something else than roots ; and it required all the caresses and persuasions of Mary to mollify the offended lady. "I knew your father was full of fancies, my love," said Mrs Burtonshaw, when her niece went with her to her own apartment ; "but I never could have believed him so far gone as this—and Maria Anna to give in to him ! Of course you're looking pale, my darling—I knew you would—you

always do when I go away ; and to think of them *starving* you, my poor child ! ”

“ They have not starved me yet,” said the laughing Mary ; “ and now that you are done with being angry, Aunt Elizabeth, have you not brought any news from home ? ”

“ Yes, boxes full,” said Mrs Burtonshaw, restored to good humour by the idea. “ But Mary, dear, tell me first—Did you look at poor little Miss Francis ? Shall you like her ? I am sure she will make you a nice companion. Are you pleased with her, my love ? ”

Now Mary Cumberland was accustomed already, with the calmest self-possession, to exercise a very distinct and positive will of her own. Obedience was not a quality of hers ; and the want of it gave rather too much sharpness and distinctness of outline to the character of this young lady — which, after all, was a very good character in the main.

“ How can I tell, aunt ? I only just looked at her,” said Mary. “ But I did not want a companion ; I was a great deal better alone.”

“ Don’t say so, my love,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. “ You want a young friend. I know you want a young friend ; and you must try to like her, for your poor aunt’s sake.”

“ Well, I will, Aunt Elizabeth,” said Mary, slightly shrugging her shoulders ; “ but tell me why.”

“ Poor little soul, I have brought her among strangers,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. “ She has no friends — she is quite alone ; and I promised that you would like her, my love. I did, that I might bring her here.”

“ These are all reasons why one should be sorry for her, aunt,” said Mary, who was of a logical turn of mind. “ But to like her—well, never mind. Mamma is sure to be quite in raptures with her, and I will do what I can. She looks what mamma calls interesting, aunt. I don’t like interesting people ; I am best pleased with common people, like Aunt Burtonshaw and me.”

The only answer to this was a silent hug from Mrs Burtonshaw. Mrs Cumberland would have made it an embrace, and done it gracefully ; but her sister had no thought of how it would look when, after three months’ absence, she took her favourite into her loving arms.

CHAPTER XXI.

A YOUNG CRITIC.

“AND so Miss Francis does not know any German, poor dear—and has never been abroad before—and, of course, would like to see the town? If I were able, my love, I should like, above all things, to revive my own first impressions by seeing yours, but I am not able. Mary must take you to the cathedral; and I am sure you will long, as I do, to see it restored to the beautiful religion for which it was built.”

“What, aunt! You a Protestant, to say so much!” cried young Burtonshaw.

“Ah, Sylvo! when you look to the higher sentiments of our nature—that love of the beautiful which seeks the superlative of everything—you will see how poor a thing it is to speak of Protestant or Catholic,” sighed Mrs Cumberland. “Heaven be praised, I have no prejudices! I can look with equal candour on one and another; and what I speak of, my dear boy, is the æsthetics of the matter—the fitness of things.”

“ Well, I thank Providence, for my part, I know nothing of æsthetics,” cried Mrs Burtonshaw; “ but if there is one thing in the world I hate, it is *that* Pope and all his crew. Why, they’re in the Bible, Maria Anna! everything but the name.”

“ There’s a very good principle in their fasts, sister Burtonshaw,” said Mr Cumberland. “ They call them fasts—nonsense! they are only standing testimonials to the truth of my principles. Wise men these old Romans, Sylvo; they knew man was not made a carnivorous animal, and they did what they could to loose the shackles of custom—but did not go far enough, sir—did not go far enough. That’s why they failed.”

During this conversation Mary Cumberland sat by, looking on, with a sparkle of derision in her well-opened blue eyes, and her mind on the alert and watching for a blunder. Not a crotchet of her father, nor a piece of extravagance from her mother’s lips, escaped the notice or the criticism of Mary. The justest sentiment in the world would have presented a ludicrous phase to her as she sat thus, waiting to hear “ what mamma would say next,” or “ what papa had in his head now.” Zaidee, on the contrary, who did not know these kind people, turned her eyes from one to another with devout attention. Mary Cumberland did not believe in her father and her mother — it was

the misfortune of her life ; but Zaidee Vivian, with her simple sincerity and her child's heart, believed in every one whose words had the sanction of age ; and had a natural veneration for the natural orders and classifications of life. While the one sat on the watch to find something which might be openly laughed at, the other turned from speaker to speaker with genuine respect ; and Mary was disposed to pity the poor child who listened so devoutly to mamma's enthusiasm and papa's philosophy. She herself had a great contempt for both of these. She concluded that Zaidee must be a great deal lower than herself in what she called intelligence and spirit.

“ Yes, you will show Miss Francis the cathedral and the town. Do, my love,” said Mrs Burtonshaw ; “ and I shall have my *news*, you know—all my budget from home—ready when you return. Well, dear, she is not equal to you perhaps, but she is a good girl for all that—and left so much to herself. Do go with her, Mary, my darling ; the walk will do you good.”

Mary shrugged her shoulders and went.

They had a very silent walk for some time, each of them busy with an examination of the other, which soon, however, merged with Zaidee into entire occupation with what she saw. Yonder again was that great tower raising itself so loftily, with such a grand simple grace over all those burgher houses—over the

half-ruined fortifications and swift-flowing river. Mr Cumberland's house was just without the walls ; and before they had reached the square in front of the great church, Mary had perused her new companion all over, from her brown face—which Mary, in opposition to ordinary predication, concluded would be handsome some day—to the feet which went so quickly and so silently over the rugged narrow pavement. There is little traffic in the city of Ulm. The broad sunshine fell over this great square, uninterrupted save by the linen awning of one small fruit-merchant, who sold two winter-apples for a kreutzer ; and by a passing cart—a triangular trough of wood which a patient cow was dragging meekly towards the Platz. And there, with some little houses—houses that looked so dwarfish beside its great porportions — clinging on like mosses to the basement of its wall — this stately pile of building erected its lofty roof, and threw up its delicate shafts towards the sky. Mary Cumberland would have thought it very grand if her mother had not been in ecstasies ; but Zaidee, who had no such consideration to deter her, looked up at it in perfect silence, straining her wistful eyes, but saying not a word. “If she goes into raptures, I will have no more to do with her,” said Mary to herself ; and Mary watched her with a suspicious eye, and the look of a cynic. To be only fifteen, yet to dread “humbug”

everywhere, is a great misfortune. The young lady eyed Zaidee curiously, with her half-derisive eyes.

But Zaidee only drew a long breath, and gazed again. This great tower of the Cathedral of Ulm should have been a heaven-piercing spire, they say, and is not half completed ; but chance has been kinder than intention, and given a picturesque effect to the abrupt little roof and pinnacle, which perhaps might have failed in a work of finished regularity. The stone is red, but greyed or greened all over with the faintest universal tinge of moss. “Was it ever built, do you think ?” said Zaidee, turning round upon her companion rapidly. If she had made a thrust at her with the dangling weapon of this passing soldier, she could not have taken her critic more completely by surprise. Mary’s eyes, with all their incipient satire and watchfulness, fell in a moment before the simple sincerity of her companion. Zaidee meant what she said ; and if some one had been by with a tale of miracle, and vouched for it, that this complete and perfect edifice was found one morning, in the old years of fable, by some devout and pious burgher, standing firm as it does now, without a stone laid or a pillar raised by mortal hands, this visionary girl would have believed it. But the unfortunate education of Mary Cumberland made imagination either “humbug” or “display” to her. With the sore contempt of one

who is subject to daily humiliation from false exhibitions of sentiment, this poor girl scouted and scorned the true. "You should say that to mamma," said Mary, with a little laugh ; but not the less was Mary struck with wonder and curiosity, scarcely less than Zaidee's own. "What does she mean, I wonder—what can she mean ?" inquired Mary of herself. She was of a truthful nature, and fact was familiar to her ; but she did not comprehend at all how it was that Zaidee's mind in its fresh and open youthfulness, full of belief and marvelling admiration, could really mean only what she said in asking such a question. The young lady was armed at all points against enthusiasm ; but not for all this little Wirtemberg could Mary Cumberland have told you what Zaidee Vivian could mean.

They went on again after that to the other lions of the quaint little ancient town, and to the Danube flowing full and strong under its walls. They went in silence, not knowing what to say to each other ; and Mary could not record a single "beautiful," or "grand," or "sublime ;" or, indeed, an exclamation of any sort from her companion's lips. "Are you not pleased ? would you rather go home ?" asked Mary at last, weary of puzzling and being disappointed. "Do you think Ulm is not a fine town, after those you have seen ?"

“ I have never seen anything like that,” said Zaidee, pointing to the tower, which was always visible, rising through the clear blue frosty air, at every turn they took.

“ Do you think it is beautiful?—do you think it is grand ?” said Zaidee’s tempter.

But Zaidee looked uneasy, was slow to answer, and would not be beguiled into transports of which her companion could be comfortably contemptuous. “ I do not know what names to call it,” said Zaidee ; “ I think it looks as if it lived, and had been here for all these long, long hundreds of years. Did you ever see a great mountain?—is it like that tower ?”

“ Did *you* never see one ?” asked Mary in return.

“ I only know a little hill at home,” said Zaidee with becoming humility. “ It is not high, but there is nothing higher between it and heaven ; and you can look far away to the sea ; and the wind rushes round you—all round, without any shelter. I think, though it is low and little, the mountains themselves must be like that hill : that is all I know of them.”

“ If we go to Switzerland, you will see enough of mountains,” said Mary. “ Do you like to travel ? Tell me what you like best to see. I like the valleys and the quiet country. I do not care for anything grand. I like to see the farm-houses, and the people going home at night—and poor little cottages,

and brown little children on the way.—What is your name? I don't like to call you Miss Francis," cried Mary, suddenly plunging into the frankest unreserve; "and tell me what you like best to see."

This sudden leap from suspicious restraint into the exuberant friendship of a school-girl, puzzled Zaidee almost as much as Zaidee had puzzled her new friend. But the surprise was a pleasant one; and the two girls proceeded on their way, arm-in-arm, comparing likings and experiences. The stranger had made a conquest already. This honest, ill-nurtured, improvable Mary was Zaidee's fast friend.

CHAPTER XXII.

FRIENDSHIP.

“AUNT BURTONSHAW said I wanted a companion—I never thought so, I am sure; but now I see Aunt Burtonshaw was right,” confessed Mary Cumberland. “I never had a friend before—Had you?—And I want to understand you. You want to understand me too, I suppose? And now come and tell me what you like and what you don’t like, and all that you think about. I shall call you Lizzy—I like that best for a name, because there is nothing fine about it. Do you like Ulm, now that you have seen it?—do you think it is a grand church that?—and isn’t it funny to see these poor cows instead of horses, and the country people with their red handkerchiefs and their brown faces? They don’t think of their complexion in Wirtemberg; they have no time for that. Were you ever ill? I was once since we came here; and it was so strange to lie and listen to the river, and to the great chimes in the Dom. I should have died, I think, but for Aunt

Elizabeth. Was she very good to you ? Do you like her very much ? Every one ought, I think ; for she is always so kind."

Coming to a pause, less from want of matter than from want of breath, Mary pulled her friend's sleeve, and looked into her face. "Are you asleep ?—or why don't you speak to me ?" cried Mary. "Why did you come to Ulm ? Now, tell me quick, for I don't like solemn people. What made you come here ?"

"It was as good as dying," said Zaidee, in her low voice ; "it is so far away."

"As good as dying !" Mary was struck with horror. "Why, what put dying in your head, I should like to know ? Is the house so dull, do you think ? I don't like dull houses myself, nor a great many heavy trees ; but mamma thinks it romantic—interesting ! One can't help what one's mamma thinks—people must submit to that," said Mary, shrugging her shoulders ; "but I am sorry if the house looks so dismal to you."

"I do not think the house is dismal. That little room is like a little room at home," said Zaidee ; "and I like to be here. I was very glad to come. Do you know any stories of the time when that tower was made ? I think it must be a very long time ago."

"Do you like old stories ?" said Mary, at present bent, with true girlish earnestness, on a minute com-

parison of experiences and opinions. “ *I* like stories of common people and the present time—I don’t care about antiquity. Mamma says I have such bad taste, and am so prosaic. I like to-day a great deal better than yesterday ; so I am not like you.”

“ I like to-morrow,” said Zaidee, her dark face brightening, “ where I can make stories for myself, and they may all come true. *Have* you bad taste—and are you prosaic ? I should not like that.”

“ Mamma says so,” said Mary, with the unfailing shrug. “ Oh yes, I suppose I am. We are not interesting, nor romantic, nor poetical ; we are only common people—Aunt Burtonshaw and I.”

“ What does common people mean ? ” asked Zaidee.

But Mary could not very well answer the question. Mary had no recollection, at the moment, of the pride that apes humility—she only knew that she was opposed, with all her might, to the sentimentality of mamma, and did not perceive, that to boast of *not* being superior, was about as bad, and rather more foolish, than to boast of superiority. Mamma’s extreme refinement and ethereal delicacy threw Mary, in disgust, to the opposite extreme ; but simple Zaidee, who was no observer of character, and who asked the question in pure good faith, and without an inference, could not help to enlighten her friend.

“ I mean, just like everybody else—I mean—why,

just common people, to be sure," said Mary, eluding the difficulty. "Now, what I should like best, when I am grown up, would be a great house in the country, like that beautiful place papa was so foolish as to sell; with a village at the park-gates, and London not very far off. I should like to live a pleasant, neighbourly life, and visit the other people about, and go to town sometimes. I should like to have a great many pretty dresses and jewels, and everything handsome about me; and to choose my own friends, and have things like what other people have. I should like to have a cheerful house, and everybody saying what they thought. That is what I should choose."

Zaidee made no answer; she was looking out from the window where, beyond that great tower, the clouds were troublous and broken like the stormy Cheshire skies; and Zaidee's tangled thoughts were flying hither and thither, like so many birds of passage, between the Grange of Briarfard and Ulm on the Danube—this far-away foreign town.

"Why will you not speak?" asked Mary. "I tell you what I am thinking, but you never say anything to me. Tell me, what should you like best?"

Zaidee made a long pause—of consideration, as her companion thought. "I would like to be the youngest child, and always to live at home, and never bring harm or sorrow," cried Zaidee in her low and rapid

voice — and Zaidee in her imagination saw a hundred crowding pictures of the blessedness of the youngest child ;—“ whom no one could ever think of leaving fortunes or estates to—the little one, everybody’s servant, whom everybody loved,” said Zaidee. And Mary could by no means understand the passion of restrained and eager longing which sounded in Zaidee’s cry.

“ Are you afraid of having a fortune left you ? ” asked Mary ; and it was a very legitimate question. “ Did any one ever threaten to leave you a fortune ? ” continued the young lady, roused into something of her former criticism and suspiciousness. “ I should not have run away if I had been you. I should like to have a fortune left me myself. I am afraid we are not much like each other, after all ; for *I* am not above being rich, or fortunate, or happy.”

But if this sidelong shaft was intended to wound Zaidee, it proved a signal failure, for Zaidee’s thoughts had already struck aside on different ground. “ Do you think little children when they die are always sure to go to heaven ? ” asked the dreamer, withdrawing her eyes from the sky, where they had travelled upwards by means of the great tower, and fixing them wistfully on Mary’s face.

Mary, who was very honest, and reverenced everything which she called religion, without knowing very well what religion meant, faltered a little. “ Yes, I

think so," said Mary ; but it struck her at the moment, more than usual, how far out of her acquaintance this other country was.

"Then I wish most of all I had died then," said Zaidee ; "that would have been best."

"I cannot tell how it could be best to die," said Mary Cumberland. "It is all very well to say such a thing ; but no one means it, I am sure. Why, if it was only for other people, would you like to make some one grieve for you ? I should not, though I am not sentimental. I should not like to think of any one weeping and mourning for me."

"No, if you brought harm to them," said Zaidee quickly ; "but if you only died ! We all loved my Uncle Percy when he was living, but so dearly, so dearly, when they carried him away ! I could bear them to grieve for me ; I could bear to see them weeping if I died ; but not to vex them and bring them trouble, and live through it all. They would know me then. No one would think of harm or sorrow, but only of love, if God would let me die ! "

"Who are *they* ?—and who is your uncle ?—and what do you mean ?" cried Mary Cumberland. "You are a strange girl. I do not understand you. What do you mean ?"

The next words that Zaidee addressed to her, convinced Mary that anything like a "rational answer"

was not to be expected from her new companion. “ I hear the Danube,” said Zaidee. “ Is it far till you come to the rocks and castles ? for I see none here.”

“ What has the Danube to do with it, then ? ” cried Mary, with some petulance. “ I like to speak rationally. I like to know what I am talking of. I cannot leap about like this. There are no rocks nor castles for a long way. For my part, I do not care for them ; but I like very well in summer to hear the water rushing along by the old walls. The river never makes one dreary ; it is not like the sea.”

“ Did you ever see the sun set on the sea ? ” said Zaidee, whose imagination at the moment was suddenly emblazoned with all the stormy glories of the Cheshire sunset — a daily marvel, such as Mary Cumberland knew not of.

“ Oh yes, I have seen the sun set on the sea — and mamma said it was heavenly, and papa wondered whether we might not pierce down through the earth with a tube, and get to the antipodes before him,” said Mary, with an uneasy ridicule and impatience. “ Do you know there is one thing in the world I should like above all other things, and I will never get it. I should like to have wise friends.”

From this exclamation, uttered with a little haste and heat, Zaidee instinctively retreated. Zaidee had an intuitive perception that, however true Mary’s

observations might be, she was the last person in the world who ought to have made them. Poor Mary Cumberland, all the tenderest and fairest of human emotions had been made suspicious things to her clear and homely understanding. No admiration at all was better than wordy raptures over everything ; and Mary was disposed to defy, and cherish a resentment against that Beauty at whose shrine her mother was a weak worshipper, and to hold Nature and Art, those oft-quoted potencies, as twin supporters of a fictitious system, all false pretension and vanity. “Humbug,” said Sylvester Burtonshaw, who was no great example of good sense, though on a different model from his Aunt and Uncle Cumberland ; and the word was very much in his young cousin’s thoughts. She sat at table, like Mr Burchell, and said “Fudge !”—the only concession that she made to her parents being that she said it within herself. Now, Zaidee Vivian was quite unlearned in fudge and humbug. When Mary’s eyes were sparkling, half with angry shame, and half with derision, Zaidee listened with involuntary respect ; for Zaidee, who was almost destitute of the ordinary forms of politeness, had much of its essence at heart, and a great reverence for all whom she believed her superiors, a class which included her whole acquaintance over twenty years old. But it happened well that Zaidee’s respectful listening did not lead her to adopt

Mrs Cumberland's enthusiasms, or Mr Cumberland's philosophies. Not Mary Cumberland's unbelieving disrespect was more proof against conviction than her companion's attention, for Zaidee had a strange inalienable independence in that wild visionary mind of hers. Her thoughts were communicated to no one, but ran on in a perennial stream. She was quite invincible to rational argument, this poor child, and far less in danger of change than was Mary with her logical and reasonable understanding ; for Zaidee Vivian reasoned only through her heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EDUCATION.

“Now, Mary, my darling—it is what I have often longed for—you have a companion with you, and I shall have the great delight of instructing you myself. You are very intelligent, I know, my dear Mary. What do you think most necessary for a proper education?”

“I cannot tell, indeed, mamma. Everything, I suppose,” said Mary, with her customary shrug.

“That is true!” cried Mrs Burtonshaw, shaking her head solemnly. “The masters *we* had, Maria Anna! But Mary knows so much already—more, I do believe, than I do now.”

“She has had many advantages,” said Mrs Cumberland; “but, my dear Elizabeth, I must beg you not to interrupt the lesson. There is much truth in what you say, Mary;—Miss Francis, my love, what is your opinion?”

“I only can read—and write a little,” said Zaidee,

with great humility, shrinking from what was to follow.

“Very well, my dear children. Now I will tell you what is my idea of the first thing needful to a proper education. It is to teach your young minds to *think*, my loves. Mary, what were you thinking of just now ?”

Mary, though not much given to diffidence, blushed scarlet at this address, and hung her head. Her thought, if she had reported it, would not have been much to her own credit, or to the satisfaction of her mother.

“You cannot tell ? Fie, child, how thoughtless,” said Mrs Cumberland. “And you, Miss Francis, what was in your mind ?”

But Zaidee, too, faltered. There were so many things in her mind, she could not withdraw one separate fancy from the stream, and present it as an individual thought ; for they were all fancies, and the number of them was infinite : these irregular battalions never marched in single file.

Mrs Cumberland shook her head, and tapped them playfully over the fingers with the paper-knife she held in her hand. “Yet I daresay you both believe you were thinking, though neither of you can tell what it was,” said their instructress. “Now, education enables you to think, and makes you masters of

your thoughts. I will give you a subject. Here is a book upon the table—it is Macaulay's *History of England*. Let me know what you think of it, and of English history in general. Take ten minutes, and form a just opinion, my dears."

Mrs Cumberland looked at her watch with a complacent smile, and took up the book she had been reading, as she left her astonished pupils to their first exercise. They were all seated in the Salle, the general sitting-room of the family, at the comfortable English end of it, looking down upon the long avenue of grey matting, of marble tables and gilded chairs standing against the wall. February days are cold on the banks of the Danube ; and once more there glowed a little furnace of intense red within the opened door of the stove. Mrs Cumberland, in a dress fitting close to her thin figure, with her braids of hair smoothed down upon her thin cheek, sat upon a sofa turned towards the light. Her sister, wrapt in a cosy shawl, with a cosy cap, enclosing her pleasant face in its frame of lace and ribbons, bloomed like a winter rose beside the frosty lily at her right hand. Mrs Burtonshaw had her back to the light, and was painfully endeavouring to whisper some original suggestion on this great subject to help the cogitations of her niece. "My dear Elizabeth !" exclaimed Mrs Cumberland. Mrs Burtonshaw fell back upon her knitting like a culprit,

and only tried to telegraph with her eyes. A solemn silence followed. One could see by the dancing fun in Mary Cumberland's eye, that it was very near being disturbed by a burst of laughter ; but prudence prevailed ; and amid the deepest stillness, and with all the help which could be afforded to them by Aunt Burtonshaw's telegraphing, Mrs Cumberland's pupils pondered their theme.

Macaulay's *History of England*, and English history in general—the subject was a sufficiently great one, and deserved rather more than ten minutes' consideration, and graver critics than girls of fifteen. The mind of Zaidee Vivian, to whom the fascinating volume on the table was unknown, was cast afloat in an instant upon the chronicle of Froissart in the Grange library, and upon the infallible records of one Shakespeare, an authority greater than history. Zaidee did not make much progress in thinking, though she tried conscientiously. These wayward fancies of hers carried her off to the courtly assembly before Harfleurs — to Faulconbridge sparring at Austria with his wicked wit—to poor, proud, frantic Constance, and the cruel counsels of King John ; and sent her away down the stream in the most magnanimous impartiality, to take side with every unfortunate. Bolingbroke first, and then King Richard ; poor old York, with his pretty Rutland ; and saintly Henry, with his haughty

queen. Zaidee's meditations would only have ended with the extent of her knowledge and recollection, had she been left to herself—when lo ! there broke upon their maze the rustle of Mrs Cumberland's sudden movement, and her sharp and high-pitched voice, as she consulted her watch once more. “Ten minutes—have you finished thinking, young ladies ? Now, Mary, what have you to say ?”

“ Well, Macaulay's History is a very pleasant book to read, mamma,” said Mary.

Mrs Cumberland nodded her assent.

“ And English history is”—But here Mary, whose voice had an unmistakable quaver of laughter in it, stopped short, and bit her lips to keep it down. “ English history is—”

“ A very great subject, Mary, my darling,” broke in poor Mrs Burtonshaw, whose telegraphed and perfectly unintelligible communications had become every moment more vehement. Mrs Burtonshaw was much alarmed, lest her favourite should come off second best.

“ Elizabeth, I *must* have silence !” cried Mrs Cumberland. “ English history is—Mary, pray go on.”

“ English history is a very great subject, mamma, as Aunt Burtonshaw says,” said Mary, very demurely, and with a little curtsey, for Mary had risen with wicked formality to be examined.

“ And that is the sum of your reflections on such a glorious theme ! ” cried Mrs Cumberland, elevating her hands. “ Well, the first duty of an instructress is patience. Sit down, and I do not wish you to rise when I question you ; we will do better next time, I trust. Now, Miss Francis, tell me your thoughts on this subject, my dear.”

But Miss Francis, worse than Mary, could not answer at all. A flood of thoughts came pouring into Zaidee’s mind : her brown cheek flushed, and her pulse beat high ; but, alas ! they would not be brought to the bar, these rebellious imaginations ; they would not stand up and answer to their names, and give due description of themselves. Zaidee faltered, looked up, and looked down, and could not tell what to say. At last, as her eye caught the book upon the table, she made shift to answer,—“ Indeed, I never read it ;” and, shrinking back with the humility of a penitent criminal, Zaidee waited to hear her ignorance condemned.

“ Really I do not make a very promising beginning,” said Mrs Cumberland. “ Never read it ? Do you know nothing of history, then, my poor child ? Is that what you mean to say ? ”

“ Only Shakespeare and Froissart,” said Zaidee slowly, hanging her head, and feeling herself a very culprit. Mrs Cumberland brightened again.

“That is very well, my love,” said this encouraging preceptress ; “and I only want to hear your opinion of them to be quite satisfied with you.”

But, alas ! Zaidee could give no opinion—neither on the abstract question, nor the particular one. She only sat very still, in a state of overpowering self-reproach and humbleness. She could not comfort herself by reflecting how ridiculous mamma was, as Mary did. Zaidee could find nothing to complain of but herself. Whole ten minutes to think in, and not a morsel of thought to come out of it ! She was not bold enough to look up to meet her questioner’s eye.

“We will change the subject. I see it is too much for you, my dear children,” said Mrs Cumberland, “and the exercise is new and unusual. You were visiting the Cathedral yesterday—there is a delightful theme !—the Cathedral of Ulm, and architecture in general. Let me hear your thoughts upon these.”

But Zaidee ! Zaidee ! The good lady never meant your wayward fancies to climb up and build nests for themselves like so many birds in the fretted niches of yonder noble tower. While Mary wonders vainly what style this Ulm Cathedral is of, and tries to recollect, but doubts if she ever heard its date and builders, Zaidee makes a bewildering flight from the little church at Briarford to the stately German Dom, and links together in a hasty procession all the other

great buildings she is aware of having seen, from that pepperboxed and genteel erection, rich with the characteristic graces of the eighteenth century, where Mrs Disbrowe and her household go to church every Sunday, to other foreign cathedrals of which the travellers had a hasty view on their journey here. Zaidee is in great haste, terrified lest the ten minutes should expire before she has reviewed her subject ; but alas ! when the ten minutes have expired, it appears again only too evident that Zaidee's troublesome ideas will not march in rank and file.

Undiscouraged by her failure, Mrs Cumberland perseveres proposing subject after subject, as various and diverse as the topics of a popular course of lectures. But so far as to-day's experience goes, this system for encouraging thought is not a remarkably successful one, and Mrs Cumberland dismisses her pupils, of whom the one is full of mirth and mischief, and the other greatly humiliated and self-condemning, with a long-drawn sigh. "Another time we will do better, let us hope," says this patient teacher ; "you are sad thoughtless children ; education has everything to do for you."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THEORIES.

“ LEARNING lessons is quite a different thing. There is some sense in learning lessons,” said Mary Cumberland ; “ but I can’t go and tell everything I think to mamma. I don’t believe mamma would understand me if I did. I am quite sure I should never understand *her*. Let us have masters, Aunt Burtonshaw, as you say. I always did my tasks, and was ready for them ; but I can’t help thinking in my own way. I can’t think in anybody else’s. Ask Lizzy here if she is not just like me.”

“ But dear, dear, what will Maria Anna say ?” cried poor Mrs Burtonshaw. “ She has set her heart on it, Mary. She will blame me for it all. There, now—there’s a darling—I am sure you will try again.”

“ If Maria Anna would pay less attention to that child’s mind, and more to her diet, she would do better service,” said Mr Cumberland, who had just come in. “ But, between you and me, Elizabeth,

your sister is extremely fanciful. Her own whims are all the rule she has, you see ; nothing like fixed principles. Her standard changes every week or two. I am not saying anything against Mrs Cumberland, who is a superior woman ; but she wants repose, sister Burtonshaw. She is a great deal too fidgety for the comfort of the house."

While this speech was being delivered, Mr Cumberland was leisurely perambulating the apartment, with one hand behind him, and with the other eagerly picking up and examining every scrap of written or printed paper which came in his way. Mr Cumberland's sharp eyes travelled before him, scanning everything with a curiosity for which no detail was too minute. He went on talking as he surveyed the side-tables, which were burdened with lumber enough to give his inquiring mind full scope.

" What do you think of the Fourierists ? sister Burtonshaw. An absurd prejudice has swamped poor Robert Owen in our country. But I am a candid man ; I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that communism is the true state of civilisation. Do you know I have a great mind to shut up this paltry old house, and be done with the trials of private housekeeping, and join myself to some company of social brethren. The happiest way !—not a doubt of it. Though, of course, Maria Anna will grumble at the blessed equality which

characterises such settlements. One of the South Sea Islands, for example—if such a paradise should be in the market—with a heavenly climate, and fertile soil, and a refined community. Why should I be such a fool as to keep my house here, with a pack of servants to look after, and appearances to keep up, and all the rest of it, when a free mind, and a life according to the rules of Nature, would make another man of me?"

"Nature must be hard to lay hold of," said Mrs Burtonshaw, roused to a momentary asperity.

"Ay, sister Burtonshaw?—why so?" cried the philosopher, facing round upon her.

"Because you have been hunting her since ever I knew you," exclaimed the incensed lady, with a little outburst. "You sold Whimsleigh, which ought to have been Mary's, poor dear, for Nature; you came here for Nature; you lived on *sauer-kraut* and radishes for Nature; and now you have to seek her at the end of the world among a crew of pagan socialists! What's Nature, I should like to know? Does she teach people how to conduct themselves—to think on their responsibilities—and mind their children? I had rather know my duty than Nature, if you consulted *me*."

"What! angry, Elizabeth?" said her brother-in-law, with a little crowing laugh. "Angry, my good sister? Throw it off; it is only a passion fit for the

ignorant. Yes, I must follow Nature ; it is my mission. What another man may pass by, I feel it my duty to go into. People leave great truths to develop themselves in these days ; but I pride myself in being on the alert to perceive them wherever they can be discovered. The true life principle is the grand object of search in all ages. Women are always bustling about small matters—it is quite right—it is their nature ; but we will make a revolution in all your little fashions, sister Elizabeth. Yes, yes, though one should go to the South Seas for it, there is nothing like Nature ; and, I thank heaven, you are quite right : I have pursued her all my life.”

So saying, Mr Cumberland sat down, and drew a thick French pamphlet from his pocket, while his daughter, in great excitement, hurried Zaidee away. Mary Cumberland, whose youth asserted itself strongly enough when there was opportunity, was not unfrequently startled into the language and the decision of a full-grown woman. “ If any other man had said it, one might have hoped it was too ridiculous,” said Mary, with the varying complexion of strong alarm and excited feeling ; “ but papa is fit to do anything. I tell you I will not go ! I will have nothing to do with his fool’s paradise—I will not ! I will rather go and starve at home.”

“ Starve ?—they will not give you leave,” said

Zaidee. "No one can die except God does it for them. Is it far away? for I would rather go there than go home."

"Yes, they would have me sacrifice all my life," said Mary, bitterly, without noticing Zaidee's interruption. "They would shut me out from everything that others have. I should have only theories to live upon, if they had their will. You need not look at me so. Perhaps I am not amiable. I never pretended to be amiable, or superior, or intellectual, or any of these fine things. I am only one of the common people. I am content to live as everybody else lives. Well, never mind, there is always Aunt Burtonshaw; and I never will go away. Come and talk to my old Jane."

They went up-stairs together silently to Mary's room, which was one of another long suite of apartments, with folding-doors closed and barricaded, and looking very white and chill in its great extent of wall. Mary looked round upon it with discontent. "I might have had a cosy little room at home instead of this. What was yours like?" said Mary; "but I am sure I cannot say I have ever lived at home. We have been moving about all my life."

"Mine was"—(Zaidee saw the place in all its quaint and quiet solitude as she spoke)—"small and high, like the little room I have here; but there were dark bright pannels on the walls, and an old oak chair, and

old pictures in the window. A cross was one—I think of it every day," said Zaidee with a sigh ; " and the winds were rushing at it all day long—there are no winds now like what there are at home—and sighing and shouting about the house all night. When the wind is high here, it is like a friend to me ; I always try to listen if I know the voice, and wonder—though it is so foolish—if it has been there—at home."

" They are like that in my country," said a little old woman, approaching to them hastily. From the thin locks gathered under her white muslin cap, to the well-shod feet appearing under her dress, this little woman, with her round ruddy face like a russet apple, her small sparkling black eyes, her little air of self-consequence, was Welsh all over. Good-humoured, yet pragmatical—quick to take offence, and endowed with a great deal of innocent self-complacency—not one of Mr Cumberland's miscellaneous crowd of servants was half so thrifty or so comfortable as this little personage—a standing memorial of Mr Cumberland's rustication in Wales, whence Jane had followed the family. Jane, who insisted upon being called Mrs Williams down-stairs, and who was accordingly addressed by that dignified title in about as many different pronunciations as there were servants in the house, was Mary Cumberland's especial attendant.

Mary was too much talked at down-stairs to appreciate poor Jane's simple stories, her overflowing store of moral reflections, and accumulation of good advice ; but even Mary discerned enough of the old woman's character to permit her the privileges of a servant of the old school.

“ They are like that in my country—you come from Wales, for sure,” said Jane. “ Them is the winds for light hearts—you take my word for it—and cheeks like roses. Where I come from was under Moylvama, and she is only small to them great mountains as is in South Wales. And to speak of rivers ! for certain, sure, I could wade this one—and you see me—you young ladies is taller—sooner than a great big man, the biggest of all the Joneses, could cross them that comes down all in a haste and flurry, with the foam flying, from the hills. You, Miss Mary, I won’t have you laugh then—you was a small chilt—you could never tell my beautiful Wales from another place. Miss—chilt—you other one—what people do you know in Wales ? ”

“ Mr Powis came from there. I never knew any other,” said Zaidee.

“ Mr Powis ! Was it my beautiful darling lad, that was old Sir Watkin’s boy ? ” cried Jane, drawing closer. “ I’m a small old woman now, and mind Miss Mary, but I’d have you to know I was Sir Watkin Powis’s

first dairy-woman, and a great lady in my young days. We've been decent peoples—we've not never taken service with the common. My father was body-servant to a great squire over the Dee, and my sister was no less than in my lady's chamber at the grand house in Powisland. Yes, sure, the Williamses is known—though I be come to a foreign part, and have Miss Mary to mind in my old days."

" You are not very complimentary to Miss Mary, Jane," said Mary Cumberland.

" A good chilt," said Jane, nodding her head, " and gives little trouble ; but not like them little laaties at Powisland, that were grand-mannered like angels. For certain, sure, I'd serve lords and laaties sooner than the common ; but meaning no harm here. Many's the pretty story I could tell you of old Sir Watkin, and let you see his picture ; yes, indeed, and papers I've got that belonged to the family from the time of Noah—them that they had before that, was spoilt with the water. You will laugh, then, you wicked chilt ? But I could show you—well, never mind. The Powises is as old as Wales ; and will you just tell me what part of the world the Almighty was done with first of all ? Them that is scholards in my country would be sure to know."

" But I am not a scholard, Jane ; indeed, I could not tell you," said Mary.

“ Yes, indeed,” said the old woman, nodding her head once more complacently ; “ Wales wasn’t the last, you take my word for it. I know a vale lies at the foot of them low hills as you go to the sea ; there is a river on every side, and the beautifullest flowers in the world, and all kinds of beautiful fruit grows there. Husht, then, and whisper, you children—all the clergy in the world wouldn’t hinder me ; but I know what that place is.”

“ And what is it ?” asked Zaidee eagerly.

“ It’s Eden, chilt. Yes, sure, it’s the garden,” said Jane with solemnity. “ No one had need say it wasn’t to me ; and I know not the hard heart wouldn’t pity Adam, driven out to England among the savages ; for you was all savages, and not a decent thing to put on. All the fights that was fought, and all the grand castles that was taken, who was it, then, but the Powises ? I could tell you—yes, sure—loads of tales.”

CHAPTER XXV.

A NEW LIFE.

AFTER this introduction, it is not difficult to imagine how Zaidee, with her warm imagination and faculty of belief, sought the society of Jane. Zaidee's perceptions were sadly obtuse in respect to the ranks and degrees of ordinary life. She felt it no condescension to seek out Miss Mary's Welsh attendant, as she had found it no derogation when she was left to the society of Mrs Disbrowe's Irish nurse. The girl lived so much in an atmosphere of her own, that the manners of others were harmless to her, whether it might be the over-fine manners of Mrs Cumberland, or those of Mrs Cumberland's servant, which were not fine in any respect. Zaidee was not uninterested in any member of this household. Her mind was so fresh and open, that even Mr Cumberland's philosophies broke new ground to its undoubting simplicity. Her thoughts, unsceptical and unenlightened, entered into everything. What was "fudge" to Mary's indignant experience,

was often a new idea to the ignorant faith of Zaidee. She believed in Mrs Cumberland's endeavours to make them think, unsuccessful though these endeavours were ;—she believed in Mr Cumberland's attempts at the conversion of the world by vegetable diet ;—she found a charm and interest in all she heard, because she trusted without hesitation that all was true. Her mind was large enough to receive floating visions of those old fabulous Powises, and of the equally fabulous new paradise in the South Seas, and, in her visionary way, to speculate on both. Zaidee's great grief at this time was, that she could not think to Mrs Cumberland's dictation. Her great amusement was listening to the stories of old Jane Williams ; and her favourite occupation was still the sewing, which was always to be found in Mrs Burtonshaw's room. For Zaidee, who, besides this apparent world, had a world in secret which no one shared with her, there was no employment so consolatory as this feminine occupation, which gave her an excuse for silence, and full scope for thought. Mary Cumberland did not understand it. Mary had accomplishments to keep up, and an indefinite quantity of "practising" to do. She was determined not to look like a savage if she ever should attain to "society" and England again, and had no mind to educate herself for the South Seas. So Mary was of a hundred different opinions respecting her new

companion. At times she envied—at times she laughed at—at no time did she understand her ; but liking grew strong between these two girls : they went upon the ways which were so different, with a growing regard for each other. Mrs Burtonshaw was delighted with her success. She, good woman, who never looked beneath the surface, was not puzzled by Zaidee. She understood the poor child perfectly, said Mrs Burtonshaw. Miss Francis was shy, and did not talk much—it was quite natural ; and she liked plain-sewing. Pity that young ladies in general were not of her opinion ? But there was nothing *outré*, or odd, or unusual about Miss Francis ; she was no more “interesting” than another ; she never pretended to have a history ; she was only a good, quiet, thoughtful little girl.

“There is deep enthusiasm in those eyes,” said Mrs Cumberland. “Credit me, I know woman’s heart. Dear child, if she has not a history now, she will soon have one. I tremble for what she may have to suffer. She will love, and she will grieve ; but she shall have my care and sympathy, Elizabeth—all that I can do for her, poor little predestined martyr. I can see her fate.”

“Her fate, Maria Anna ? Why should the poor girl have a fate ?—and why do you not think of your own dear child ?” cried Mrs Burtonshaw. If there was any distinction in having a fate, Mrs Burtonshaw

did not see why it should be withheld from Mary. Miss Francis was very well ; but it was rather too much to exalt her at the cost of one's own child.

“ Ah, Elizabeth, I know woman's heart ! ” said Mrs Cumberland mysteriously. And if all the pretenders to this occult knowledge are as learned in it as Mrs Cumberland is in the thoughts of these two children, the science will not make much progress in our day. Woman's heart was liable to but one disease, according to the interpretation of Mrs Cumberland and her kindred philosophers ; and that was the malady vulgarly called love ;—a malady from which Mary and Zaidee were equally far apart.

“ I observe she has an open mind,” said Mr Cumberland, talking in his usual way, as he poked about the side-tables with his curious eyes. “ She *listens*, that child ; she does not only *hear*. A very useful member of a community, I'll warrant, if all you say of her is true, sister Burtonshaw—and a quiet little thing into the bargain. Your daughter is whimsical, Maria Anna ; what right has she to have opinions ? Make a woman a speculator, and she veers about to every wind. Why can't Mary listen and be quiet, like this little girl ? ”

“ She's not pretty ; I don't know what's the good of her,” said Sylvester Burtonshaw. This young gentleman's opinion was the only unfavourable one.

These fanciful people were not unkind in any particular. Their household was something of an extravagant household, every one doing what was good in his own eyes ; and if the scene had been London, you could well have understood why Mr Cumberland, awe-stricken at sight of his banker's book, sighed for the South Seas. But “nobody” lived at Ulm ; the English tourists were few and unfrequent ; and there was no artificial heightening of prices. The waste was cheap that was done here on the banks of the Danube ; and society did not require much from the odd English people who visited no one. They lived in a very liberal fashion, and fed not a few from the crumbs of their abundant table ; and even if Mrs Cumberland had not been far above such miserable details, the addition of one little individual like Zaidee was quite unfelt in the great house. They received her very readily into the heart of the family, such as it was ; and Mary's companion shared everything with Mary, even the gifts of Aunt Burtonshaw. In a very little time she was fairly naturalised as a member of the household. Even in Mr Cumberland's plans Zaidee had a place ; and except the one dread of returning to England, which Mary was so anxious for, fear departed out of our young pilgrim's heart. She wandered about those quaint German streets ; she sat awed and unresponsive in the choir of that great

solemn cathedral, while Mary went lightly over the stalls, commenting on the wonderful carving, which was one of the details which Zaidee did not notice ; or watched the sunshine streaming into the empty air, through the grand painted windows, while her companion ran over the “wohlgeborens” on the tombstones in that little chapel in the wall. More and more Zaidee marvelled if this stately place had ever been built, which looked so perfect, tinged all over with its down of moss ; and more and more Mary wondered and smiled at Zaidee, and asked what she could mean. They were close friends ; and Mary poured into her companion’s ear all her girlish positive opinions, her purposes and hopes ; while Zaidee responded with hints of her own story, which any one who had the clue might easily have put together. But Mary had no clue, and like most others who, born to few cares, are fully disposed to make the most of what they have, she was occupied by her own affairs too much to give a very nice attention to her companion’s. Simple Zaidee betrayed herself many a time. Mary, not less simple, wist not of the self-betrayal, and was none the wiser. They lived in great cordiality, a true pair of girlish friends ; and Zaidee had almost forgotten now those bitter weeks and days which changed her life from that of the youngest child at home to the poor solitary governess at Mrs Disbrowe’s.

She read that loving address to herself in the great newspaper every night ; she prayed for them lovingly, name by name, when she had read her chapter, after the fashion of her devout child's training, in her father's bible ; she thought of them all day long, and every day ; but her heart was lightened out of its first agony. She no longer recollects Aunt Vivian's first outburst of dismay, or Philip's pale courageousness as he told his discovery, when she woke in her little foreign chamber. Sometimes it was Mary, sometimes a good thought of last night's chapter, sometimes an anticipation of to-day's employments, which woke Zaidee in the morning ; and her days were full of pleasant occupation till the night brought rest once more.

Then there was a world of legends in the little closet which Mrs Williams called her room ; and Zaidee became a living chronicle of the somewhat faded glories of the antediluvian house of Powis. By dint of sympathy, Mary too came to listen to these stories—began to see a little difference between true romance and counterfeit—and to find out dimly that all poetry was not rubbish, nor all sentiment fudge. “Aunt Burtonshaw is always right—I wanted a companion—I had no one to tell me it was only mamma,” said Mary to herself. But it was consolatory to find out now that “only mamma,” and not all the minstrels and sweet singers of all ages were in the wrong.

CHAPTER XXVI.

JANE.

“WELL, chilt, you see, if this was Sir Watkin’s boy, he was a beautiful lad,—and his name was a great grand name, but not like the names we have in Wales. The sweet Welsh, I never forget *it*; but you never know what them English ladies do call their boys. He was son to a pretty lady. She was come from the south, and married to Rhys Llewellyn, Sir Watkin’s youngest boy. So, when Rhys died, and the lady died, the small child came home to Powisland, and there he was bred, and my very eyes did see him grow. My sister was called Mary, and she was in favour with my lady. Many’s the thing Mary did see of the family. We’ve all been in trust where we’ve been in service. I never did tell you of my father. He went out of Wales. Yes, sure. Oh, it’s an evil day when one of us goes out of Wales! But he had such great money, he was persuaded. I saw the gentleman when I was a little child. He was a

great Squire, and had great riches, and was mad in his temper, and six foot tall, and great lands to the very sea. My father did live in terror for him. He was a great man—he minded nobody ; and Evan Williams was of the thought the devil did have him—and red fire was in his eye. When my father did talk of him, the little children was scared, and durst not stay alone ; and himself, once he was frightened with a waterfall, and came home like death, and said the old Squire had called to him in the stream. You children, will you husht, then ? Does bad men ever come up to this world again, to scare us ? No, sure ; God Almighty takes thought for that.”

“ And what was the old Squire called ? ” said Zaidee. The girl was trembling with sudden interest. Every old squire could not be Grandfather Vivian ; but it was his character as well as his designation.

“ Called ? He was out of Wales, child. Your names is not like our names. It was a hard name to say. I cannot think of it now. Ah, it is a good place where all is Williamses and Joneses, and the gentry is old blood, and so is the commons, and all are of one. Then there’s kind servants and kind masters ; and the one does well for the other, and both’s friends. It is a cold country where every one has a different name —yes, indeed. And how can I tell what the old Squire was called ? But he died. The Almighty takes

thought, and Satan gets his own. Husht, children. When he's got their poor souls, and carried them down below there, maybe Satan has a poor bargain. I tell you my thought ; he did have his hands full with that old Squire, you take my word. My father was a big man, though I be small. He was Evan Williams by name, and well thought of in his own country ; but the Squire frightened him for all. No, child, I forget his name. It was a name was reckoned a good name in Cheshire, and as old as they do be in England. I have it somewhere. You come to me in my room one day, and you shall see my papers. If a scholard was to look over them, they'd bring me riches, I do believe. My father had some, my brother had some, and our Mary ; for old Sir Watkin died, and there was a scatter at Powisland, and every one took what useless thing was lying. I have a housewife, Miss Mary, all velvet and gold, was made by my lady's hand. Yes, sure ; the grand old ladies, they never did scorn to thread a needle. They had the use in their fingers, Miss Mary—yes, sure."

" You forget I made a cap for you. I think you are not at all grateful, Jane," said Mary Cumberland.

" You listen to me, child ; 'twas for your own fancy," said Jane, nodding her head. " When you was gone, I had to do another. That wasn't never made for Jane, that wasn't. Well, child, what was

you saying? The papers? I'll show them to you another time. Look you here. There's all them collars and laces; they've got to be mended, and it's Jane, Jane,—there isn't ever another; and down stairs it be nothing but calling of Mrs Williams, as if I was a fairy. Now, can I go troubling among dust and papers, and all that to do?"

"I am afraid I could not do it," said Zaidee, looking wistfully at this more delicate branch of occupation. "Will you let me try, and I will take care of them? Will you let me see the papers, Jane?"

"The papers is nothing to you, child," said the old woman. "Will I put my laces in your hands? No, sure—and what would the lady say if Jane was to fail her? There is not one else in the house to be trusted—not another. Go to your plays and your books, you children—that is all you be fit for; and come to me another day, when I do have time. Yes, indeed, you be Solomon's lilies; you do neither toil nor spin. But my wish is toward my duty, like as it always is in Wales."

The pragmatical old woman turned short round upon them and carried off her laces. As she left the girls, Mary Cumberland laughed at her withdrawal, but Zaidee only grew paler. A slight nervous tremor came upon the young exile. Her mind was quite possessed with the idea that here again was this

dreadful Grandfather Vivian interposing to bring ill fortune ; and Zaidee, whose life had been shipwrecked by one document of his, had the most overpowering anxiety to get possession of any other scrap of his ill-omened writing, and destroy it at once. True, it did not seem very apparent what harm could be done now by any such discovery ; but Zaidee's mind was not much given to logic, and she was full of an unconscious and visionary superstition. The old Squire was the evil genius of the family, and the thoughts of his descendant ran off into mysterious marvellings. What if this wandering evil spirit himself directed her where to find these unrepented wrongs of his, and made her the instrument of mischief again and yet again ! Poor Zaidee shook and trembled, and her brown cheeks paled into that chill dark pallor to which any great pang brought them. She, poor innocent child, whose humble love would fain have served her family night and day, could it be possible that this satanic influence was upon her movements, and that, all unwittingly and against her will, she was the agent of a cruel spiritual persecution—a warfare waged against the living by the unblessed dead ? She did not hear the wondering call of Mary Cumberland—she did not see the astonished face of Mrs Burtonshaw, against whom she stumbled in the passage ; she fled hurriedly to her own little room,

and threw herself on her knees by the bedside. She, who had no other friend nor counsellor, had the use of bringing all her complaints and trouble direct to the Heavenly Father. In her fright, with her heart beating loud, this simple child lost no time in thinking of it, but came in haste to make her outcry of fear and horror to the compassionate ear of God. Becoming reassured and comforted, she rose from her knees again, not delivered from her terror, but full of a great hope and persuasion, which took away its pain. “ You evil spirit ! ” said Zaidee, with a glow in her eyes, “ perhaps you see what I do, but you cannot know my heart. God will not let you harm them any more. If I find any of your cruel papers, I will destroy them ; you shall not have power over me.”

What was that that sounded round the old German house ? Only the spring breeze, stirring the branches faintly, shaking the February raindrops from the budded leaves. To the excited ear of Zaidee it sounded like a moan ; and Zaidee could not help trembling as she left her little room once more.

Mary, who is “ practising ” down stairs, looks up as she enters. Aunt Burtonshaw, who has great patience with the practising, and thinks all Mary’s music harmonious, comes and takes into her own Zaidee’s cold hands. “ What is the matter, dear ? ” asks kind Mrs Burtonshaw. “ You are quite pale, and your

hand trembles. So cold too ! Come beside the stove, my love. One can't say, come near the fire in this country. There, Sylvo, get up, you great fellow, and let this poor dear warm her fingers. She has caught cold, poor child. Sit down till I get something nice for you ; and you shall have a warm drink, and go to bed."

"I am not ill," said Zaidee. "I was only thinking,—there is nothing the matter with me."

"Why are you so pale, then ? Nonsense, child, I know better," said Mrs Burtonshaw. "Girls like you have nothing to think of, that can make you pale. Your head aches, I am sure. Mary, my love, close the piano. Sylvo, put the screen here, to keep off the cold wind. There are always draughts with these folding-doors ; there is no such thing as comfort in this country. The footstool, Sylvo. Mary, bring me that shawl. Now, my dear, are you comfortable ? And I will go and see about some nice gruel. She looks quite ill, poor child."

And Mrs Burtonshaw, who is now in her vocation, steals away in noiseless slippers, and closes the door with the most elaborate caution. Zaidee, obliged to be a patient against her will, sits with resignation in the easy-chair, her feet on a footstool, a shawl wrapped round her, a little table at her elbow to prevent her rising, and a large folding screen to shut out all

draughts behind. Sylvo has taken his lazy length away ; Mary sits by the patient's side, half sympathetic, half cognisant of the true state of affairs, and wickedly abetting Aunt Burtonshaw. To be nursed by the kindest hands in the world, even for a fictitious illness, is no great misfortune, after all ; and Zaidee almost forgets the dread of Grandfather Vivian, which caused her trembling. She is better already, Mrs Burtonshaw says, when she returns with the gruel. See how good it is to take illness in time.

C H A P T E R . XXVII.

MRS WILLIAMS'S ROOM.

MRS BURTONSHAW was still more rejoiced and exultant next morning to find that she had wrought a complete cure, and that, emerged from the purgatory of gruel, bathed feet, and double coverings, her young patient took especial care not to look pale in her presence again. “You must take care, my dear, and wear this shawl to-day. What a pleasure to think you are so much better!” said Mrs Burtonshaw. When she was gone, Zaidee, conscientiously carrying the shawl with her, hurried to seek admittance at the little door, three or four steps up in a corner of the wall, which belonged to the private apartment of Jane Williams. In this great house, where there were so many rooms, this little one was merely intended for a linen-closet; but pragmatical Jane was very Welsh and very positive. She liked this small corner, which put her in mind of her limited accommodation at home, and had it crowded with her belongings, with

true rural pride. A few things in a great room looked “poor,” as Jane thought. The true sign of wealth was to pack your apartment till you had barely room to move in it. Accordingly, a very narrow winding pathway over Jane’s central carpet, and a clear space by the side of her little green porcelain stove, large enough to hold herself, her elbow-chair, and small round table, was all the available space in the private room of Mrs Williams. One window, close into the corner of the wall, gave a one-sided aspect to the little apartment ; and this window looked into a great elm tree, which, in summer, with its multitudinous leaves, and at present with a forest of bare branches, was the whole visible world to the inmate here. A spider-legged table, with numerous drawers, stood in the window, and upon it were ranged various ornamental matters—a stuffed parrot in a case, a grotto of shells, an elaborate workbox, with its lid open, disclosing all its treasures. By dint of pertinacity, Jane had managed to have these favourite articles of hers carried among the family baggage wherever they wandered ; and the old woman took pleasure in the neat cover of her table, and in the careful arrangement of these treasured ornaments. Her little mantel-shelf, too, was rich with china shepherds and shepherdesses, and supported her library of three books—an aged Welsh bible, a collection of hymns, and one of

ballads, in the same antique language—for the newspapers were the only things which Jane would submit to read in English. She was a worldly-minded old woman, but she had a national regard for “religion,” and was reverent of the name, and of its symbols, as Mary Cumberland was. Jane’s religion consisted in conning a few verses in her Welsh bible on the afternoon of Sunday, which she observed with great decorum by means of a long sleep and a grave face. Mr Cumberland and his wife were liberal, to the broadest extent of liberalism, and never interfered with the “opinions” of their servants. The “opinions” of various of these respectable domestics were in favour of coffee and music at the Rosenau, and were not against a concluding dance. Save Mrs Burtonshaw and Zaidee, whose ignorance was aghast at this, the family were extremely indifferent. Only Mrs Williams took the place of censor upon her—she who herself was virtuously conscious of spending the day as her father spent it in the recesses of religious Wales. This town of Ulm, though it was Lutheran, was no less addicted to its Rosenau and its Sunday holiday than if mass had still been said in its Domkirch ; and though Sylvo Burtonshaw concluded it “very poor fun” to sit by the long tables, on the damp soil of these gardens, sipping coffee, neither Sylvo nor his kindred knew very well how to spend the day better.

They yawned through it, for propriety's sake. Sabbath was a dead letter, and Sabbath-keeping unknown to them. They were the best examples in the world to a foreign apprehension of the dulness of the English Sunday. It was neither the day of God nor the day of home ; "the fruit of this, the next world's bud," to those hapless rich people who had only "opinions," and no faith.

But while we digress, Zaidee stands waiting at the door of Mrs Williams's room, and is very glad to see Mrs Williams herself sitting by the stove in her little sanctum, mending her laces, when she is invited to enter. A great many pieces of furniture, wardrobes, and boxes, fill up the small space within these four white walls, and Zaidee winds her way carefully towards the little throne of the Welshwoman. Looking into the elm tree is like looking into a forest. Only those bare branches and a morsel of sky are visible, of the world without ; but all the world of its inmate is within this small enclosure. Out of it she is foreign and unintelligible, even to her fellow-servants. Here she hears the "sweet Welsh," from her own lips at least, and in her own fancy lives her life over again. The hills of Wales and the grand house of Powisland rise once more before her, as she goes on with her silent occupations. Poor old Jane Williams ! she is solitary, and a stranger down stairs,

with all her self-importance ; but here she is at home.

“ Well then, child, shut the door. I will not have them foreigners looking in on me,” said the old woman. “ Did you come for the collars ? Yes, sure, them ladies that never took up a needle, they think poor folk’s fingers is made of iron. I do be busy with them ; they’ll be done in time.”

“ I did not come for the collars, Jane,” said Zaidee, with a slight return of her former trembling. “ But you said you would let me see some papers. Will you ? and I will try to help you if I can.”

“ And what do you want with my papers, child ? ” said Jane, fixing upon Zaidee her ‘little twinkling scrutinising eyes.

“ I like to see about the people you tell us of. I like to hear your stories, Jane,” said Zaidee, with unconscious flattery ; “ and the old gentleman—the old Squire. You said you would let me see his name.”

“ Well, I know a deal of stories. Yes, indeed—that is the truth,” said Jane. “ Miss Mary has her own things to mind ; for certain sure she never would listen to me. I like an open-hearted child. I do, then ; and I am good to learn any one experience of the world. Yes, sure, I’ve seen a deal myself—and my father, and my sister, and my brother—and all among great families too, and nothing common ; and

I've a deal of papers. There's all about Rhys Llewellyn that married the pretty lady ; and Miss Evelyn that runned away, and more than I can tell. They'd get me money, you take my word, if a scholard was to see them ; but I'm no scholard myself. Sit you down, child. I'll get my keys when I'm done."

Zaidee sat down patiently on the stool by Jane's feet. The old woman was very busy, holding the lace between her small brown shrivelled hands, and working with great speed. The sounds of the household life below were lost in the distance ; the long wide passages and staircase consumed them before they came so far, and in a strange isolation the little Welsh-woman pursued her labours. The wind rustled in the branches of the elm, and the rushing of the Danube interposed faintly ; these natural voices were all the sounds that came here. Zaidee was struck with the loneliness—she wondered what moving cause there could be to bring this old woman here.

"Jane, could you not stay at home ? Why did you come here ?" asked Zaidee in a half whisper.

"Could I not stay at home ? You don't know what you are saying, child," cried the old woman, indignantly. "They'd be glad to see me home—ay, and rejoice this day. I came for my own will ; yes, I did, then. I had a mind to see foreign parts. And to see the great house at Powisland stripped and bare,

and every one dead and gone—it broke my heart. I'm far off now, child, over lands and seas; but I can see sweet Powisland, and my beautiful Wales between me and that tree—for certain I can. And I think upon all my old tales; and an old woman wants no more. I'm like none of you young creatures, striving for change and new faces. I'm doing my duty. The Williamses always was known for it, and I'm content. Once I was young, and tripped upon the hills; now I'm old, and the fire is my garden. Will you husht, you child! The like of you is no judge. I please myself."

"And did nothing ever happen to *you*?" asked Zaidee. "You always speak of other people. When you were young, did nothing ever come to you?"

"Husht, I say," cried the old woman, pushing Zaidee aside, as she rose in great haste, and threw down her work. "You will be talking—you will be talking. Come and see those papers now."

With her curiosity so much roused by this, that she had almost forgotten the prior interest that brought her here, Zaidee watched the old woman open one of the drawers in her table. There were a great many bundles of letters and papers in it, tied up in a very primitive way, and at the back one or two books, rich with tarnished gilding. Jane lifted a few of these yellow parcels out, and cleared a space for them upon the ornament-encumbered table.

“Was it the old Squire’s name? You child, you keep your fingers off my shells and my birds. If you don’t do no harm, you shall come back and see them again. I’m not good at reading—my eyesight fails; but I don’t mind you looking at them, if you are a good child. Hark, now, there is Miss Mary. You’re not to meddle nothing but the letters, and stay till I come back, and don’t let nobody in but me. Hark, now, how she calls me! It’s nothing but Jane, Jane, from one day to another. Now I’m going—mind the fire, and don’t meddle with nothing, and you can look at my papers till I come back.”

So saying, Jane disappeared, shutting the door carefully behind her, and Zaidee was left in full possession of this sacred apartment, and all its treasures. A bird stirred in the elm before her, and the burning wood sank down with a little stir within the stove. These sounds, as they broke the stillness, oppressed Zaidee with returning awe. She drew the first pile towards her with a thrill of fear, expecting to see Grandfather Vivian’s well-known handwriting at her first glance. But this faded handwriting is a woman’s, and all these letters are about Rhys Llewellyn, and Evelyn Powis, and others of the house of Powisland. In other circumstances, these papers, full of family story, would have been very interesting to Zaidee, who had an unlimited appetite for story-telling; but her eagerness

after the sole object of her search was quickened into excitement by terror and a superstitious awe. That bird in the elm-tree branches fascinated poor Zaidee, as her trembling fingers undid these fastenings; and the crackle of the wood, and the strange hushed sounds she seemed to hear about her, wound her up to nervous resolution, and oppressed her with imaginative fear. "God will not let you harm them any more," said Zaidee aloud. She thought Grandfather Vivian was watching while she examined this pile to which he had conducted her, to find the instrument of evil which he had hidden there.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GRANDFATHER VIVIAN.

BUT pile after pile brought nothing to the nervous search of Zaidee. Household bills and memoranda of housekeeping, scribbled receipts of Welsh tradesmen, and rural recipes for cooking and for physic, were mingled with the letters of the house of Powis in an indiscriminate heap. The worthless and the valuable, family secrets and housekeeping instructions, preserved with equal fidelity, would have formed a strange medley to an eye less interested. Zaidee, who went over them at lightning speed, found no time for amusement. She threw down, one by one, these old correspondences—threw down some uncouth letters, signed Evan and Mary Williams, which were among the heap, and with eager curiosity searched further; but, amid all, there was nothing for her. Her anxiety gave way to disappointment. Grandfather Vivian, after all, had not been the old Squire of Evan Williams. Grandfather Vivian had not guided

her to this strange hiding-place—there was no spiritual influence mysteriously using her for its agent ; but, in her high strain of excitement, Zaidee shed tears over her failure ; she was disappointed—her expectations had been so sure.

While these tears fell, against her will, on the papers where other tears had fallen before, Zaidee drew out the old book within the drawer. It was a quarto volume, in binding which had once been handsome ; and though the gilding was blackened and the boards defaced, it still had the air of a book worn with use and not with neglect. She opened it and found it Greek, an occult language which always inspired Zaidee with the deepest respectfulness. Somewhat languidly she turned to the first page. Some large characters, written in an uneven oblique line across it, stumbling over the title and over a name, roused Zaidee once more. She read them with a double thrill of awe and mysterious excitement. She was not mistaken—her sense of invisible guidance seemed in a moment realised. The name, written long before this startling irregular line, was “Richard Vivian,” and bore a far-distant date. The additional writing—large and black, and unsteady, like the writing of a man whose eyes failed him, and who wrote thus in desperation, that he might be sure he had accomplished his purpose—came to the young investigator like

words from heaven. “ Frank Vivian, do justice to my son Percy,”—thus spoke this voice from the dead. The dreadful helpless penitence of this last outcry of compunction was visible in every line. Stumbling across his own signature, and across the title of his favourite volume, the dying man, with eyes which could only dimly discern those black exaggerated letters, had left one record behind him that he repented—and that was all. The son he addressed no longer remained to do justice to the other ; the other was gone from his heirship and his lands. Into the mysterious gloom of the world invisible this fierce spirit itself had passed long years ago. Not remorse for one wrong, perhaps, but repentance of all had visited his forlorn dying ; but no one knew the secrets of it—nothing remained to bid the judgment of this world reverse its decision but this last cry of despairing atonement. The child whom his evil caprice had endowed so sadly, read his latest words with eyes that shone through a mist of tears. Holding the volume fast, Zaidee looked round her into the still and solemn daylight of this lonely room. “ Grandfather Vivian,” said the girl, firmly, “ if you are here, I did you wrong ; and if you guided me here, I am glad ; and it was God that suffered you to do it, for I will never do them harm ; and I am my father’s heir, and this is what he has left to me.”

She took the volume to her again, and put her innocent lips to that dark memorial of wrong and of repentance. The tears were choking at her heart, but something restrained them, and drove them back from her dry eyes. With a great effort she restored the papers to their place, put the precious book under her shawl, and went to her own room, gliding with steps as noiseless and rapid as a spirit ; then she laid it under her pillow, and threw herself down upon her little bed. She was worn out with intense excitement, with terror and awe, and a superstitious sense of some invisible presence. When some one came to seek her, late in the day, after the early twilight had begun to fall, Zaidee's brown cheeks were bright with the flush of fever. She was lying very quiet, awake, looking into the shadows with eyes only too lustrous. They could not tell what had happened to the child, who scarcely could speak to them when they questioned her. Her tumult of thought was dying into unconsciousness—her excess of emotion fading into a long trance of waking sleep. They watched by her in great terror, while those open eyes of hers gazed into the darkness and into the candle-light. Mrs Burtonshaw, with eager kindness and a little liking for the office, changed her dress immediately, and, with a thick cap and a shawl, took her seat by Zaidee's bedside. Mary hung about the foot of the little bed in silent agony.

All the while these bright eyes searched about through the little apartment. Even Sylvo Burtonshaw sat up down-stairs, and Mr Cumberland fidgeted, half-dressed, about the door of his sleeping-room ; and watchers were never more rejoiced at the saving calm of sleep in the crisis of disease, than were these when the fitful slumber of fever closed the eyes of Zaidee. The news was carried down stairs, and Mary was sent to bed. "She will be better to-morrow," said Aunt Burtonshaw, as she dismissed the unwilling girl. But Aunt Burtonshaw shook her head, and knew better, when she was left by the bedside of Zaidee, to watch through that long spring night.

And Zaidee had a fever, and for weeks lay on that restless couch of hers, struggling for her young life. Mary, who would not be restrained from watching by her, and Aunt Burtonshaw, the kindest nurse in the world, gave sedulous attendance to the unconscious girl, who did not rave or exhaust herself in ordinary delirium, but only searched the vacant air with her brilliant eyes, and seemed perpetually looking for some one, though she recognised neither of her nurses. They had found the book under her pillow, and put it away without further thought. No one associated this old volume with Zaidee's illness ; and even old Jane's inquiries for her lost treasure were fruitless in the excitement of the time. This whole

whimsical house was concerned for Zaidee. Mr Cumberland forgot to read his last importation of theories, and took to investigations of homœopathy and hydro-pathy—of electricity and mesmerism. Mrs Cumberland kept her room, and was ill by way of meeting the emergency. Sylvo, infinitely bored, set out for his college, to the relief of everybody. The house became very quiet, above stairs and below, and full of sick-nurses, of whom Mrs Cumberland appropriated the lion's share. "If she should be worse—if anything should happen," said Mrs Burtonshaw, with tears in her eyes, as she bent over the bed of her young patient. "Poor dear, we are all strangers to her—she is far from her own friends."

"Nothing will happen, Aunt Burtonshaw," cried Mary vehemently; "and she loves us—I know she does. She has no friends."

Aunt Burtonshaw shook her head, and raised her hand to silence her indiscreet assistant. "You must never get excited in a sick-room. Go and lie down, my darling," said Aunt Burtonshaw. Mary, who would have been shocked at the idea of lying down, had she known that the crisis of this strange illness was approaching, was reluctantly persuaded, and went. Her good aunt sat down once more at the bedside of the young exile. "Poor dear!" said Aunt Burton-

shaw. She thought this solitary child, far from all who loved her, was about to die.

But Zaidee did not die. Her young elastic life, almost worn out by the struggle, was not yet conquered. The morning brought sleep to these bright open eyes, and when she woke again, it was to look with recognition and intelligence upon her watchers, and to bear the twilight and the lighted candles without any of those wistful investigations which her eyes had made in her fever. The German doctor pronounced her out of danger—it was the signal for a great increase of Mrs Cumberland's malady ; and Mr Cumberland, down stairs, was very busy getting a hydropathic apparatus in readiness for Zaidee, and waiting for the English mail which should bring him a *multum in parvo*—a dwarf medicine-chest, rich in globules, and warranted to cure all Ulm of all the diseases under heaven. A larger consignment in shape of a galvanic machine was also on its way, to aid in the recovery of the patient. It was the especial character of Mr Cumberland's genius, that he combined into one half-a-dozen nostrums, and piled one infallibility on the top of another, making out of other people's systems, a system of his own. With all these murderous preparations in progress, it was well for Zaidee that Aunt Burtonshaw barricaded her folding-

doors, and held the amateur physician at bay ; and that health, once returning, came at a rapid pace, and needed little assistance. “A touch of electricity will set her up again. Wait till I get her down stairs,” said Mr Cumberland, as he carried off his wet blankets from the inexorable defender of Zaidee’s room. But even Mr Cumberland, though foiled in his endeavours for her recovery, had a warm heart to the invalid, whose illness had cost him some anxiety. Mrs Cumberland kissed her pale cheek when she was able to leave her room, and Mary rejoiced over her like a recovered treasure. Poor little Zaidee, in her orphan solitude, had fallen among friends.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RECOVERY.

As Zaidee came to health—one might almost say, came to life again—the events which preceded her illness came slowly to her recollection, one by one. Making a timid and eager search through her room, she found the book, in which that solemn message was, laid carefully aside in a drawer; and Zaidee remembered how it was the tumult of desires and imaginations, occasioned by her discovery of it—the question whether, armed with this, she might go home again—whether Philip and Aunt Vivian would hold it of enough authority to annul that other unhappy document, which, combined with her visionary dread and awe, had been too much for the young mind, overtired and solitary. As she considered this momentous subject now, in the calm of her weakness, Zaidee decided that this was not sufficient warrant; and though she longed exceedingly that they should see these last words of the old Squire, she could think of no possible way of sending the book to them with-

out a betrayal of her secret. She was here beyond reach of their search, and their search hitherto had been unsuccessful, and she shrank within herself, even in her safe solitude, at the idea of being found and carried home the heiress of the Grange. She never would supplant Philip, and here she was as safe as if she had died. But now a great compunction for Grand-father Vivian took possession of the child. She had done him wrong—they had all done him wrong. He was no longer “that wicked old man,” though Sophy still would call him so ; and Zaidee was humbly repentant of her own error. All the solitary time of her convalescence — every half-hour in which her watchful attendants could be persuaded to leave her alone — her meditations were busy upon her own uncharitable judgment ; and many letters, written and destroyed in a returning panic—impossible letters, which should convey this intelligence without giving a clue to her hiding-place, were written in secret. If those longing thoughts could travel to them !—if those half-articulate words, which broke from her lips in secret, could but reach the ears they were addressed to ! But Zaidee recollected herself, and took her resolution again to her heart. Better that they should never hear from her, best that they thought her gone out of the world for ever ; and Zaidee’s simple mind supposed no changes in the home circle. She thought

of the young Squire ruling his paternal acres, and all the household prosperous and happy as of old. The image in her mind had suffered no clouding out of the dim horizon of her own fate. She looked back upon them, and the sky was ever smiling. It was the comfort of her life.

When Zaidee was well again, Jane Williams came one morning with a startling knock to her chamber door. Jane came armed with law and justice—a self-appointed magistrate, legislating in her own behalf—and demanded her book back again. Zaidee was fortunately alone.

“Yes, child, you deceived me,” said Jane. “I did trust you—yes, I did—and left my room and all I have to you. In my country, for sure, you might leave an open door and gold untold; but here I’d not have anybody turn over my belongings. Look you here, child, I put you in charge of it, and I went to Miss Mary. Well, then, I come back—and my door is open, and my fire be burning, and them papers, that’s worth money, swept in like dust; and when I do look close, my book is gone. My father’s book it was. It belonged to the old Squire. You tell me just why you runned away.”

“I was ill, Jane,” said Zaidee humbly. Zaidee had turned the key already in the drawer which held the stolen book.

“Was it ‘cause of being ill you took the book, you child?” cried Jane. “Yes, sure, I heard you was ill ; and this and another said, she’ll die. If you’d have died, what would you have done then with a book was not your own ?”

“Did they think I would die?” asked Zaidee. It gave her a strange solemnity of feeling. She had been near this great event, and knew it not.

“It’s waste time talking,” said the peremptory Jane. “Will you let me have my book ? Husht, then, I’m not hard on you, child ; it isn’t no pleasure to you now—it’s in a heathen tongue—it may be not a good book, for aught I know. You listen to me. I have got a pretty book all stories and tales. I’ll teach you to read it—I will, if you are good—and give me back that old thing that’s no pleasure to you.”

“Will you let me keep it, Jane ?” pleaded Zaidee. “I like to look at it, and I have pleasure in it. May I have it a little ? When you ask it again I will give it you.”

The little old woman looked at Zaidee’s pale face with compassion. “You poor child, you want to be at home and the wind on your cheeks,” said Mrs Williams ; “but if you do have a fancy in your head, as they be all fancies in this house, will I baulk you, you little one ? No, sure, the Williamses was always known for tender hearts. You take good care of it,

then, and when you're well you may come back again, and I'll tell you of Rhys Llewellyn and his pretty lady, and how it was Miss Evelyn runned away."

"How did she run away?" said Zaidee eagerly. She was suddenly struck with the expression, and in her innocence immediately leaped to the conclusion that the running away was like her own.

"There was a rich gentleman, and there was a poor gentleman," said the ready narrator. "Sir Watkin and my lady, they would have the one, and Miss Evelyn, poor soul, she would have the other—you don't know nothing about such things, you child—and they fell upon a plan. I don't mind telling it, you be certain, unless some one does want to hear."

Jane was clear-sighted, and saw that her young listener, finding the story not like her own, had flagged in her attention. But it was only for a moment, and Zaidee listened with great edification to the story of an elopement, in which Jane Williams herself had been art and part. But the current of her own thoughts, more interesting than any story, ran through the whole. "Frank Vivian, do justice to my son Percy"—these words rang into her heart like a trumpet; and Zaidee's mind made visionary addresses to Grandfather Vivian, telling him that she was her father's heir, and that she would never do them harm. Philip's chivalrous pride in his right as

head of the house to protect her title to his own inheritance was repeated in the girlish flush of resolution with which she protested to herself that she was her father's heir, and that *this* was the inheritance Grandfather Vivian had left her. Now that she had time to think of it, in spite of the disappointment in her first hope of going home, this last discovery was a great support to Zaidee. She was no longer totally alone in her exile and self-banishment. It seemed to her that now a little company had interest in her flight; that the old Squire's will had guided her unawares; that her father's honour would have been compromised had she done otherwise. She never could have found this had she remained at home. She must have done them wrong without remedy, and never known that Grandfather Vivian wished, at last, to restore them to their right. Her young imagination, calmed as it was by her long illness, was so strong still that it elevated her into the position of representing both Frank Vivian and his father. She had done what they would have done, but were not permitted. She was the heir of this injunction, and she had obeyed it; and high within her, forlorn and generous, rose Zaidee's heart.

When she was alone she took this book and laid it with her father's Bible. She read the family name in both of them with a strange pride and tenderness.

She was no longer Zaidee Vivian—she had given up all right and title to be called so ; yet father and grandfather seemed to give to her a hold upon her native name once more. “ I have not died now,” said Zaidee softly, as she held these treasured volumes together ; “ but some time God will send for me, and then I will send my books home and say I am Zaidee, and write down how I have always thought upon every one of them at home. I wonder why I did not die when I was so near it ; but next time God will take me away.”

With this conclusion Zaidee solemnly put away these her possessions—wiped from her eyes the dew which was not positive tears—and, closing her secret world, with all that belonged to it, went away to be Mary Cumberland’s companion in the other world below stairs, where Mr Cumberland was experimenting on his galvanic battery, and Mrs Cumberland making observations on a new poem—where Mary “ practised,” and Aunt Burtonshaw did Berlin work—and where no one had ever heard of Grandfather Vivian, or was aware of such a place as the Grange.

C H A P T E R X X X .

A PAIR OF FRIENDS.

AFTER this a gradual change came upon Zaidee's life. Her mind began to grow, and her frame to develop. Mr Cumberland's philosophy and his wife's aesthetics both came in to lend something to the unconscious and involuntary culture of the stranger within their gates. These pranks of science and mad theories gave what was in them of truth, exaggerated or overlaid, to the simple eye which looked upon them trustfully through the pure daylight of nature ; and those romances which made Mrs Cumberland highflown, were sweet and harmless to the fancy of Zaidee, who needed no extravagance to display her appreciation of the loftiest art. Mary Cumberland's firm standard of good sense did not answer this visionary girl, who never transgressed its laws, yet went a world beyond them ; and Mary learned to understand how fudge was by no means an unfailing synonym for sentiment, and how sentimentalism was something quite distinct and

separate from the tender human pathos which belongs to all things striking deep to the heart. Mrs Cumberland still made many efforts to teach them to think, and filled her stores with "subjects," between which lay gulfs wide enough to discourage the most daring leaper, and the young ladies had no extraordinary success in thinking after this fashion ; but once released from the necessity of bringing up their thoughts to drill, a very respectable amount of meditation came to be done between them. Quite secure from interruption—with closed doors, with the womanly excuse of sewing, which Mary condescended to for sake of Zaidee's example, and with even Aunt Burtonshaw out of hearing—many grave and weighty subjects were discussed by these two girls. In Mary Cumberland's large sleeping-room, with its little bed by the wall, its great closed folding-doors, and its three windows, they sat together in their private convention as the spring warmed into summer. The furniture, though not very small, looked dwarfed in the distance of those great recesses, and so large an amount of lofty white wall gave a vacancy and extent to this apartment, which was not quite consistent with our English idea of a young lady's chamber ; but the trees shake out their opening leaves upon the windows, the sunshine comes in, and throws a long radiant line over the white and empty floor. Yonder is the tower of

the Dom rising high towards those fleecy showery clouds which speck the serene blue overhead—the chiming of the cathedral bells strikes now and then through the air, which always tingles with the wayfaring of this swift-footed Danube passing by. And here the two girls are content to sit for hours, working at their needle, talking of every subject under heaven. The one of them, who has perceptions of a more everyday character than those of the other, piques herself a little on her experience and knowledge of the world; but the world, an undiscovered wilderness, lies far away from these budded flowers—these children who are women, yet children still. In the boldness of their innocence they stray into wonderful speculations, and plan such futures as never yet existed—then sink their young sweet voices, to talk with a hushed and reverential earnestness of matters which no one directs them to—the holy mysteries of heaven. In their fearless and unshackled communion there is nothing too deep or too great for these companions to touch upon; and the Saxon beauty of Mary Cumberland—her thick curls of fair hair, and well-developed womanly figure, and countenance, where everything is fair, and clear, and full of sunshine—does not differ more from that brown expressive face, which is already changing into what it shall be—from that pliant shadowy figure, with movements

as quick as those of a savage—than the mind of Mary differs from Zaidee's mind. But the same sunshine falls over them—the same sweet influence, the common dew of youth, is on the friends. There is no path so high but they will glance across it, as they sit with their woman's work between them—none too dangerous for their innocence to venture upon. When they know little of the way, they go wondering, and telling each other what their wonder is ; and now and then they stop to count the chimes, and Zaidee's eye follows that noble line of building up into the sunny heavens ; and they sigh when necessity, in the shape of old Jane Williams, summons them to other occupations than the sewing about which they have been so busy. Commendable as this industry is, it comes sadly in the way of accomplishments, and Mary's "practising" grows rather tiresome to Mary. Independent of all other inducements, this young lady has a liking for talk, and bears her part in it always with spirit ; and there are no hours so pleasant to these companions as the hours they spend in Mary's room.

To Mrs Burtonshaw there is something extremely puzzling in this sudden industry. She thinks sewing a most laudable occupation, and was delighted for the first few days, but so long a persistence puts her out of her reckoning. "Not tired yet Mary ?" says Mrs Burtonshaw. "When I was like you—though I am

very fond of it now—I hated the sight of needle and thread. I think it is time for your practising, my love. See what the dear child has done, Maria Anna. All this—and this—since the beginning of the week! —and Elizabeth Francis the same. When we were young, we had a present to encourage us when we did well. They thought it a great thing to make us industrious when we were young.”

“I would a great deal rather they spent their time in improving their mind,” said Mrs Cumberland. “A servant could do all that for me ; but no one can make Mary a refined woman unless she chooses to apply herself—nor you either, Elizabeth, my dear. Come here, and I will give you a book to read, and put that stupid sewing away.”

“You are only discouraging the children, Maria Anna,” said Mrs Burtonshaw, with displeasure. “It is not stupid sewing—it is very nicely done, I assure you ; and I am sure I think it a great deal more sensible employment than what you call improving their mind.”

“These girls only puzzle you, sister Burtonshaw,” says Mr Cumberland, who sits at the lower end of this universal apartment, among the gilded chairs and marble side-tables, arranging his battery : “they only get together to gossip ; they care no more for your sewing than I do. They are like all you women—

they love to lay their heads together and discuss their neighbours. By the way, I wonder what effect the phrenological cap would have on this propensity. Young heads—fine development—a slight pressure on ideality to reduce it; another on language; and a corresponding elevation for benevolence. Not the least pain or confinement, sister Burtonshaw—not the slightest; the gentlest administration of moral discipline that ever was invented. I'll see about these caps presently. If we return to England, their minds will require to be fortified. A good idea—I am glad it occurred to me—a beautiful experiment! I'll have it in universal use before a year is out."

"Put iron caps on their *heads*, Mr Cumberland!" cried Mrs Burtonshaw, with a scream of horror. "We had steel collars in my day, and they say *that* was barbarous, though it was only for the shoulders. My dears, I will never let it be!"

"Pooh! nonsense. Your steel collars were only physical; this is to insure a good conformation to the *mind*," said the philosopher, who was already making models with paper and scissors. "Suspend your judgment, sister Burtonshaw. Wait and see."

This new project was disturbed by the arrival of letters from England. Every one, then, had some news to tell. Mrs Burtonshaw's intelligence was that her friend, and Zaidee's friend, Mrs Lancaster, was

dead ; and the kind-hearted good woman retired to her own apartment to devote an hour's lamentation and a few honest tears to her old companion's memory. Mr Cumberland returned to his machinery. Great havoc, and an infinite quantity of fright and hysterics, this startling machine had brought into the household. Almost every individual in Ulm who could be brought to consent to it, had received a "shock" from the domestic demon ; and if many cures were not wrought by galvanism in the Danubian city, it was no fault of the English resident, who presided over it with ardent philanthropy, and dispensed its beneficial influences with a willing hand.

And Mr Cumberland, who talked now of returning to England, had quite given up his prospective paradise in the South Seas. The phrenological cap was nothing to a Polynesian banishment, and Mary was gracious, and only laughed at the threatened infliction.

And thus ran on the altered life of Zaidee. She was already one of this household—a child of the family, received warmly into its heart. The world was not a cruel world to this poor little exile of love ; and as the child silently gave place to the woman, the years and the hours brought grace, and tenderness, and unexpected gifts of fortune, enriching Zaidee Vivian's youthful life.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CURATE'S WIFE.

TIME, which went on slowly with the household on the banks of the Danube, did not move more rapidly under the shelter of the hill of Briarford. All the little eddies of excitement had long since passed away from the quiet waters there. Except in the Grange, people had ceased to remember Zaidee Vivian, or to talk of her strange disappearance. Instead of that, everybody was concerned and sympathetic for the failing health and woe-begone looks of poor Mrs Green, the Curate's wife. Was her husband good to her, strangers wondered, who did not know the clumsy but genuine kindness of the perplexed Curate; and neighbours nearer at hand concluded her to be in a hopeless consumption—a “decline,” which nothing could arrest. Good Mrs Wyburgh went a toilsome journey to her own cosy kitchen, to superintend the making of good things for this poor helpless invalid, to whom and to whose unregulated servant the noble

art of cookery was almost unknown ; and compassionate young ladies knitted warm cuffs and jackets for the fading Angelina, to whose pale cheeks the Cheshire wind brought no roses. The cottage matrons shook their heads and said, "She'll not be long here, poor soul," as Mrs Green took her languid walk with her book of poetry past their doors. The good Curate, who loved the helpless creature dependent on him, and who was by no means exacting in his personal requirements, was struck to the heart with fear and anxiety for his drooping wife. His uncouth cares and attentions were pathetic in their clumsiness. She was no great type of a woman, this poor Angelina ; but she was his, and he cherished her. She cried weakly over his tenderness many a day when she was alone, but had never courage to unbosom herself ; and Angelina was rather glad to resign herself a pensive martyr to her illness and her danger, and to feel what a sublime sacrifice she was making to her absent friend. But these lofty thoughts were only occasional. For the most part she bemoaned herself helplessly, and cried over those pages in her poetry-book—and they were many—which discoursed of blighted lives and broken hearts. That she always cried at the name of Zaidee was nothing, because she cried so much. "A Niobe all tears" awaited good John Green when he came home from his labours, and a suppressed sob

woke him in the morning. Many futile endeavours which he made to get at the cause of this mysterious melancholy, only closed with more pertinacious terror the burdened heart of his wife. Every day made her disclosure more impossible. “I might have told him at the time—I dare not tell him now,” sobbed the frightened Angelina ; and the Curate was driven into desperate theories touching the weakness of woman-kind, to account for the incomprehensible weakness of this one who had fallen to his especial lot.

In the spring of the year after Zaidee’s disappearance, when Zaidee was safely disposed of in Ulm, and far from that dreaded pool which Angelina shuddered to pass, and which haunted her dreams, the good Curate came home in great glee one morning to tell his wife how an application he had made without her knowledge for a curacy in the south had been so much more than successful, that he was now vicar-elect of a small parish in Devonshire, with an income more than doubled, and the most beautiful house in the world. “We must have no more pale faces, Lina,” said the Rev. John, patting the poor cheek, washed by so many tears, with his great kind finger. “We can afford a little chaise of our own now, to drive you about in, and the sweet air of Devon will soon set you up, my dear.” Poor Angelina’s secret had almost burst from her at that moment. She was ready to throw herself

on her knees and confess her sins to him ; but she drew back again, poor fool, and was miserable a little longer ; while he, good man, went about all his arrangements for removal—those arrangements which she could only cry over her uselessness in—and worked like a porter when the time came for packing, with the most innocent glee imaginable, and no thought of infringed dignity. They left Briarford in the early summer weather, when the rugged little hill was bursting into its glory of furze blossoms, and all the hedgerows were white with May. This season was full of the sweetest showery freshness, the gayest gales, and most exulting sunshine in boisterous Cheshire ; and good John Green directed the tearful eyes of Angelina to the brightness here, and joyfully wondered what it would be in Devon, when even in this place of winds the radiance was so warm and sweet.

But not the vicarage, which was the most beautiful of vicarages—not the soft climate of Devonshire—the novel country—nor scarcely even another prospect she had, could suffice to lighten the burden of this devoted victim of friendship. The Rev. John was disappointed, but persevered with inexhaustible patience. Then came a time when Angelina had rational occasion to be ill without any intervention of sentimental blight or heartbreak. She was very ill,

this poor young wife—so ill that she was not conscious when she became a mother, and did not hear that sweetest of all discords, the baby-cry of a new life. When she woke, exhausted and feeble, and opened her dim eyes to the light, it was to see her loving clumsy husband holding her baby to her—the tenderest and most awkward of nurses. Poor Angelina! her guiltiness rushed back upon her as the little one was laid into her arms. It was a woman's heart still, though a weak one, which fluttered against her breast, where the sweet baby breath rose and fell with such a helpless security. It was no longer “Mr Green” who knelt before her, with his face all joy and triumph: it was “baby's papa”—her child's father; and Angelina's terrors and precautions yielded to the flood of her full heart. Protected by her infant, she told him her guiltiness, and cried a little, but was bold, and bore out this dreadful ordeal. The Rev. John was much too happy to be very severe. He pitied his weak wife for all her sufferings, and, though shocked and distressed, had no condemnation for her. Baby, with its small slumbering face, and tiny hand thrown out already upon its mother's breast, covered with a shield of mighty defence the feeble Angelina. Good Mr Green, he was so reverent of the little one in its helplessness, and felt its baby state and serenity so far superior to all the nurse's expedients to amuse the

unamusable infant, that Angelina herself took dignity from this little existence one day old. He wept himself when he went down stairs into his study—wept a few great tears of joy and wondering thankfulness. His wife was restored to him, and he had a child. This good heart could not keep itself articulate for joy and wonder. No—Angelina was by no means a distinguished representative of womanhood, and the baby, perhaps, was not so pretty as your baby or mine—but they were his, and they were everything to him.

After that it was astonishing to see how rapidly Angelina recovered. Having cast off her burden upon her husband, she and her baby throve together with an equal progress. His wife in her pretty, fresh, invalid cap, with her baby in her arms, and no more tears, was something as new as it was delightful to good John Green. He said nothing about the confession for many days. He never either looked or spoke one allusion to it, indeed, till Angelina was once more established in the little drawing-room, which had never been so bright as now. Then, when he had placed her in the easiest chair, and drawn her seat towards the window that she might look out upon the autumn foliage, bright in its many-coloured vestments, Mr Green spoke.

“When you are so well now, Lina, and baby all

right, the little rogue, I think perhaps I had better start to-morrow."

"Start to-morrow!—where?" cried Angelina, with a momentary pang. Gentle as was the tone of the Rev. John, his wife had an incipient dread that he was about to betray her."

"My dear, for Briarford," said the good man, firmly. "I do not blame you for being so long of telling me. I am sure, my poor Lina, you yourself see how wrong it was; but now, of course, I cannot lose any time in letting the Vivians know. A whole year is lost already; and, with the clue I have, I cannot be easy till I have found some trace of this poor child."

"Oh, Mr Green!" cried Angelina, with tears, "she will destroy herself if you try to take her home."

"My dear, I am not Mr Green," said the Rev. John, attempting to be playful. "If I find her, I will take care she does not destroy herself."

"But John, John! papa!"

"Hush, Lina," said the Vicar, gravely interrupting her entreaty, in spite of the powerful argument of this name—"I must do my duty. Take care of yourself, and be cautious till I come back. You must mind your health now, for baby's sake as well as for mine, and leave all this business in my hands. Hush, Lina, there is nothing more to say."

And the next morning Mr Green left his wife, once

more weeping, and drove away in the pony chaise. But when the chaise came back, Angelina was able to take a drive with baby and nurse ; and though she blushed, and was inclined to cry again for shame when her friendly visitors asked where Mr Green had gone, yet by-and-by she came to be quite composed ; and, thankful that she had no chance of encountering the Vivians, committed the responsibility contentedly into her husband's hands. She had no longer any leisure to read books of poetry. She began to cut down her white muslin gowns and make frocks for baby—to glance at the pages of her old new cookery books—to set her house in order, as well as she knew how, to the much amazement of her spoilt housemaid. Angelina had found herself quite mistaken in one vocation. She had to begin to be the Vicar's wife and baby's mother now.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GRANGE.

THE Rev. John Green drove along the road to Briarford in his hired gig, with feelings strangely mingled. Regard for his old residence, pleasure at the kindly recognition which some of his old parishioners gave him, and the certain hope of steady happiness with which he remembered the change which had befallen him at home, were scarcely enough to neutralise the disagreeable feelings with which he looked forward to this visit. He did not like to say—he did not like to think—how silly and how weak his wife had been. He neither wished to accuse her, nor to make it appear that he himself had been an accessory to her foolishness ; and he feared the natural indignation of those anxious friends from whom this intelligence had been kept so long—long enough, perhaps, to make it useless—for he had himself made some inquiries as he passed through London. Eager to have it over, yet reluctant, he trotted along in the indifferent vehicle,

which was much less agreeable to the vicar of Newton Magna, who had a pony chaise of his own, than it was to the curate of Briarford, who knew of no such luxury. The turnpike gate swung open before the well-known face of “our old curate ;” and Mr Green alighted, and climbed the hilly pathway, following close upon a slim young gentleman in black, who pushed on against the wind at a pace which proved him to have no disagreeable anticipations in *his* visit to the Grange. It was not Mr Powis, who now carried his fascinations to market in quite a different quarter. Mr Green strode on with his swinging pace, admiring the gloss of the clerical coat before him, which had no heavy divinity in its pockets to drag it out of proportion. “The new curate,” he said to himself, raising his eyebrows — for Mr Green had been a vicar for six months, and already, though quite unconscious of his weakness, looked down a little upon the lower grade of reverend brethren.

The young man went upon his way with such evident use and good pleasure, that the vicar of Newton Magna, following after, shook his head, and wondered that Mrs Vivian did not think it dangerous, with her unmarried daughters, to have “a poor curate” familiar in her house. But the Rev. John had soon enough to do, realising how Mrs Vivian would look upon himself and his errand, and thinking of the

agitation, and perhaps fruitless hope, which he should bring to the family. Involuntarily his steps slackened as he drew near the door. When he had reached it, he lingered, looking upon that familiar landscape. Yonder lie all those changeless Cheshire fields. Yonder is the tawny line of sea, the yellow sandbanks, the horizon, with its blue mountains of cloud. There the tower of Briarford Church, the roof of the vicarage, the smoke ascending from the village fires, the long lines of road leading seaward—leading far into the sky. Here is the old family dwelling-place, with the last water-lily floating in the moat—the lawn like velvet—the old thorn-trees heavy with their scarlet berries. But where is Zaidee? where is Philip?—the poor supplanting heiress—the natural heir and head of the house. Angelina! Angelina! be thankful that you are safe in Newton Magna, with baby and nurse, and the new frocks, which it is so hard to cut. The Rev. John has a storm in his face, and groans aloud. You might weep torrents and not melt him, if he had you here.

The drawing-room of the Grange is perhaps in better order than it used to be. There are not half so many young-lady materials. The writing-table in the corner bears no longer any trace of the litter which Percy, his mother said, always left behind him; and Philip's newspaper has not been thrown down this

morning on the table. Mr Green thinks it looks colder than it used to do—more precise—less a populated place. In the great window, looking to the front, sits Margaret, and the light falls down full and clear, but with a chilly tone, upon the pale face which you can only see in profile, and on the white hands which hold her book. Mrs Vivian is in her high easy-chair, with her snowy shawl of Shetland lace hanging over it, and a book of accounts upon her little table. The young clergyman has arrived before his suspicious brother, and quite realises Mr Green's suspicion as he appears now, seated by Sophy's side, talking in an under-tone. Sophy's pretty face varies with the conversation from gravity to laughter, and there is a running accompaniment of smiles and blushes, quite enough to justify Aunt Blundell in particular inquiries into the prospects, means, and connections of Mr Wyburgh's curate. The library door is closed, the young ladies' room no longer throws its glimmer of warm light into the larger apartment, and there seems a great deal of space to spare in this great drawing-room, from which half of its inmates have been scattered. Mrs Vivian, closing her account-book, rises with hospitable alertness, and holds out her hand, as she welcomes warmly the old friend of the house.

“Let me speak to you alone,” says good Mr Green, clearing his throat. He is very anxious not to be

abrupt, to tell his tale gently, but is far from confident that he will be able. "I have something of importance to say to you—news. Pray let me speak to you alone."

Mrs Vivian's face clouded over. "What is it?—Philip?—Percy?—some disaster," cried the mother of these absent sons. She grasped his great hand, and held it fast with her small nervous ones. "Tell me all at once. I had rather hear it all."

"It is no disaster," said the Rev. John with a subdued groan. "It is neither Philip nor Percy—but good news—good news. Let me speak to you alone."

With such a darting rapid motion, that the Vicar of Newton Magna became more confused than ever, poor Zaidee's fairy godmother introduced him into the vacant library. While he lumbered along in search of a seat, she drew a heavy chair to the table for him, and seated herself in another. "Now, Mr Green," said Mrs Vivian. She was only half satisfied that he did not come to intimate some great misfortune to her.

Poor Mr Green! guiltless sufferer as he had been so long, he was the culprit now. He cleared his throat—grew red and confused—and at last burst into the subject over head and ears.

"My wife knows where your niece Zaidee fled to—

my wife was in her confidence—there ! Angelina has been very foolish, very wrong, but I cannot bear to hear her blamed. I have only waited long enough to see her health re-established before I came to tell you. I am grieved beyond measure. Had she spoken in time, she might have saved you all your anxiety, and rescued this poor child.”

Mrs Vivian interrupted him, rising from her seat with an outcry of joy—“Zaidee ! can you tell us of Zaidee ? where she is ? where we can find her ? I will not blame your wife—I will thank you for ever. Where is my poor Zaidee ? Tell me where she is.”

But the Vicar shook his head despondingly. “She went to a Mrs Disbrowe, whose daughters had been at school with Lina. She went as nursery-governess. They had her for two or three months, and then she went away.”

“She went away,” said Mrs Vivian, unconsciously repeating what he said,—“where is she now ?”

But Mr Green shook his head once more. “I made no further inquiries till I had your authority ; but Mrs Disbrowe knew nothing of her. She went abroad. Now that I have seen you, I will return to London. I will try every means. My poor wife ! I feel how much she has been to blame.”

“Went abroad ?” cried Mrs Vivian. “Why did she go abroad ? When ?—with whom ? And why

did a woman who had children, suffer my orphan to stray further away?"

"Mrs Disbrowe tells me she went with a lady to be a companion. I cannot tell where—she does not know," said the Rev. John, who was very humble. "The lady is dead who was the means of Zaidee's going away. No one even knows the name of the person she is with : they had no right to interfere. But I will return at once. I feel it is all Angelina's blame."

"And Philip is in India, and Bernard is abroad, and Percy is with his brother-in-law. Do not speak to me of Angelina!" exclaimed Mrs Vivian, with a gesture of impatience, "there will be time enough to speak of the past ; it is the present moment that is of importance. I will go with you myself to-night."

"The fatigue is too much for you," began the Rev. John.

Mrs Vivian only answered with another impatient motion of her hand, and beckoned him to follow her into the drawing-room. In half-a-dozen words she told Margaret, and left her to inform the amazed Sophy, who by this time had been roused from her more agreeable occupation. Then the rapid old lady left the room. Uncertain and undecided, Mr Green lingered, repeating his story to the younger ladies, who pressed upon him to hear it. As he spoke, they

brought refreshments to him with their own hands, and pressed him to eat. The good Vicar was nothing loth, but he had only half begun when the door opened, and Mrs Vivian made her appearance in a travelling-dress, and with a face so full of speed and energy that Mr Green paused in his impromptu meal, at the first glimpse of the fairy godmother, who seemed about to fly off at once in her aerial carriage. But Mrs Vivian was content to substitute the hired gig for her pumpkin coach, and in less than an hour she had given her farewell directions, and was hastening fast upon the London road.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MRS VIVIAN'S JOURNEY.

MORE speedy than it could have been without her prompt and rapid guidance, was the expressed journey by night which carried Mrs Vivian and her reverend companion to London. The good Vicar looked on in wonder from within the high collars of his overcoat upon that small delicate figure, enveloped in a great mantle, which filled the opposite corner of the carriage in which they dashed along through the gloom of midnight. Mr Green had known Mrs Vivian only as the Lady of the Manor, something fastidious and rather dignified ; and by way of making the best of Angelina, it is certain that the Rev. John had been betrayed into a little kindly contempt for the whole feminine community. But the Rev. John, with all his anxiety to recover the lost Zaidee, and so, as far as possible, exonerate his wife, was not prepared for this breathless race of inquiry. The good man felt himself seized upon by something stronger than he

was—an anxiety which, very different from his own, took this matter as an affair of life and death. With curious interest he watched his companion in the unsteady light of the railway carriage. She never spoke and scarcely moved, but sat still in her corner—her entire figure muffled in her cloak, listening to the clanging, deafening strides with which their rapid journey proceeded, and travelling faster in her thoughts than even the headlong pace at which this great conveyance travelled. He could see her steady face as the faint light swung above them, and their carriage vibrated with the gigantic impulse which bore it on. She was looking out always into the darkness. He could see her mind was impatient and chafing at the tedious journey, rapid though the journey was. The Rev. John relapsed into his overcoat, and made a vain effort to go to sleep ; but it was quite impossible to sleep within sight of this little lady's wakeful eyes.

They arrived in London at an hour much too early to disturb the slumbers of Bedford Place, and Mr Green was thankful to be permitted an hour's rest and a hasty breakfast. The Rev. John shrugged his shoulders and sighed for Angelina. The fairy godmother hurried the good Vicar off his equilibrium ; he could scarcely have been more discomposed had she invited him to an aerial drive in the pumpkin coach. When at last it was possible to proceed to their

destination, they found Mrs Disbrowe in her fresh pink ribbons and thrifty black satin gown, not expecting visitors, but quite prepared for them. Mrs Vivian did not estimate very highly the fashion of Bedford Place. Its well-preserved carpets and expedients of thrift were new to the country lady. "My poor Zaidee!" she said to herself, as she entered the drab drawing-room, where Minnie Disbrowe, exceedingly curious, kept mamma company. Mrs Vivian did not know that this drab drawing-room, with its dark green trimmings, was quite another sphere from the nursery and the spare bedroom in which Miss Francis spent her meditative days.

Mr Green was already slightly known to Mrs Disbrowe by his former visit. Mrs Vivian, however, had no recollection of Mr Green, and promptly took the matter into her own hands.

"Only yesterday I heard that my dear little niece had been here," said Mrs Vivian. "You had not observed our advertisements. We tried every means to find her. Tell me, I beseech you, where my poor Zaidee has gone."

"Zaidee! I said there was a Z on her handkerchiefs!" cried Minnie in an under-tone of triumph.

"The lady means Miss Francis, I have no doubt," said Mrs Disbrowe, looking to the Vicar, who towered over little Mrs Vivian. "I sympathise very much

with your anxiety. I cannot tell where to find her, but I will tell you all I can. The lady is"—and Mrs Disbrowe again looked for explanation to Mr Green.

"Mrs Vivian of the Grange," said the good man, who felt himself entirely thrown into the background. Then he sat down with resignation behind his "principal," content to listen, since nothing else was left for him to do.

"Miss Francis came to me about a year ago—just a year ago—before my daughter was married," said Mrs Disbrowe. "I was surprised to find her so young, but felt interested in her, and did all I could to give her authority in my nursery. The children are well grown," said Mrs Disbrowe, apologetically,—"and they were so much accustomed to their sister. To my great regret they would not pay attention to Miss Francis."

"Miss Francis ! Will you do me the favour to say Miss Vivian ?" said Zaidee's fairy godmother, with a little impatience. "Zaidee must have taken this from her father's Christian name. Frank Vivian's daughter ! I beg your pardon. The idea is so painful to me."

"I did what I could to prevent her life being painful to her while she was with us," said Mrs Disbrowe, pointedly. "Miss Francis—pardon me, I knew her by no other name—was assured of my kind feeling and interest in her, I know. Indeed, the

young lady remained with us, after it was quite apparent that she could not be my nursery governess. Then, while visiting my daughter, she saw a lady connected with us by marriage—Mrs Lancaster, who was stepmother to Mr Edward Lancaster, my son-in-law. Mrs Lancaster had a friend staying in her house, who was anxious to carry abroad with her a companion for a young lady. They thought Miss Francis a suitable person, and Mrs Lancaster came to me to make inquiries. Of course what I said was satisfactory to her, and her character was satisfactory to me. It did not occur to me to make any inquiries about her friend. I was glad to see Miss Francis provided for. I am quite certain they went abroad ; but where, or who the lady was, I am extremely sorry I cannot tell."

" But surely some one knows," said Mrs Vivian, hastily. " Some one had more curiosity—felt more interest ? You do not mean that there is *no* clue to trace my poor Zaidee by ?—absolutely none ? It is impossible. I cannot tell you how important it is to us. My poor child's character and happiness may be involved. Our honour as a family is pledged to find her. I beg of you to give me some guidance—some clue. I cannot go home without accomplishing something. Can no one else tell me where she is ?"

Mrs Disbrowe drew herself up a little. Mrs Vivian could not quite help looking the great lady, nor being

dismayed to hear of Frank Vivian's daughter as a companion and nursery governess ; and though she would have been glad only yesterday of so much intelligence, Mrs Vivian could not keep herself from being almost angry with her informant now. "To let her go without an inquiry ! with nothing to trace her by !" Mrs Vivian exclaimed indignantly within herself ; while Mrs Disbrowe, who was conscious of having done a great deal for Zaidee, was naturally still more indignant with this questioning.

"I am sorry I cannot give you information which I do not possess," said Mrs Disbrowe, coldly. "My son-in-law might have been of some assistance perhaps, but he has gone to Jamaica, to look after some valuable property left to him there under his father's will, in which his father's widow had a life interest. It is quite uncertain when Edward may return, and he might not be able to help you if he were here ; but I am much occupied with my own large family. I was not very intimate with Mrs Lancaster, and I really know nothing of her friends. Neither did I think, if Miss Francis was satisfied, that I had any right to interfere," continued Mrs Disbrowe, still more on her defence. "I had no title to take upon me the duties which *her relations* did not concern themselves about."

"Her relations tried every means to find her," cried Mrs Vivian. "She went away from us out of the

purest generosity—folly—the most perfect affection for us all. To lose this unexpected hope will be like losing Zaidee once again. Can you do nothing for me? Pardon me if I do not thank you for the kindness I am sure you have shown her. I can think of nothing but Zaidee. My poor child! My poor child!"

Mrs Disbrowe's offended dignity was appeased. She promised to write to her son-in-law forthwith, and furnished her impatient visitor, who could not be satisfied with this deputy inquiry, with his address, that she might herself write to him. She promised to set out immediately to find, if possible, one of Mrs Lancaster's servants. She expressed her deep regret that she had not known sooner—that Mrs Green had given her no hint of the young stranger's identity. Mr Green, sitting behind Mrs Vivian, shrugged his shoulders, and made a wry face, but said nothing. Angelina was spared on all hands; no one awarded her her due of condemnation; but the Rev. John profited little by this forbearance, as he was perpetually on the watch for the reproach which never came, and perpetually suggesting to himself a different turn to this and that sentence. Then he was anxious about this poor wife of his, whom he himself clung to the more, because she was condemned by others. He asked what further use he could be to Mrs Vivian;

and she, glad to be left at liberty, made no claim upon his services. So the Vicar of Newton Magna washed his hands of Zaidee Vivian, hoping never to hear more of her than that she was brought home in safety, and, with pleasant thoughts of baby, and much tenderness for his culprit wife, set off on his road homeward, where we leave him now and finally ; and Mrs Vivian pursued her search alone.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FAILURE.

BUT Mrs Disbrowe cannot find Mrs Lancaster's servant. Mrs Vivian, tantalised with vain hope, can only make fruitless expeditions to Bedford Place, to Percy's closed-up chambers, and, in this sudden change of habits and lack of comforts, grows feverish with the vain endeavours which she never personally took part in before. There is nothing for it now but to wait till Mr Edward Lancaster is heard of, to see if he can throw any light upon this darkness. Mrs Vivian must go home; but Margaret and Sophy write so anxiously, yet so confidently, of poor Zaidee—sending messages to her even, and telling of a great parcel they have made up of wrappers and cloaks for the journey, that their mother almost fears to return to them with her disappointment. Another idea strikes the retired but not world-forgetting mistress of the Grange. Captain Bernard, Elizabeth, and Percy are surprised at their breakfast-table in Brussels, not many

mornings after, by the unexpected appearance of Mrs Vivian. A very few words are enough to make them partakers of her anxiety. Zaidee is on the Continent! —Zaidee may be near them! All-forgetful of how vast that Continent is, Percy dashes out, like an impetuous youth—bursts from the great gates of the Hôtel de Suède, and loses himself in these interminable streets, looking into every face and every window. “How absurd!” he says, as with difficulty he finds his way back again. But it is strange how often this absurdity is repeated before the day is done. The most strange and feverish excitement rises among them. They are loth to leave Belgium, where there are so many towns in the beaten track of the wandering English; and Captain Bernard speaks of the Rhine, and Elizabeth of the sunny south of France. They cannot tell where to move—to their right hand or to their left. Zaidee may be almost within hearing of them, or she may be a thousand miles away. They reverse all their plans on the instant, and begin to travel once more—with an object, and with many inquiries—till winter has come only too sensibly; till Margaret and Sophy call earnestly for their mother, and till Colonel Morton has more than once written peremptory letters, summoning home his son. Percy, too, loses time in those grave and valuable studies of his. They are obliged to submit, with heavy hearts; and in November, in

boisterous weather, they at last set out for home. In all their journeys they cannot pass a figure like hers, but they are struck with the hope that it may be Zaidee ; and many times, flying along at railway speed, Percy, who is fanciful and quick-sighted, catches a momentary glimpse of some dark face by the wayside, and, when they reach a halting-place, would fain turn back to see. It is therefore with much dissatisfaction of mind, and with many doubts that they may have passed close by her present shelter, that they consent to return, with no further news of Zaidee. Their anxiety, which had been in a measure calmed by time and by the fruitlessness of all their exertions, has returned in tenfold strength. Renewed advertisements, renewed endeavours, keep the flame alive. Angelina's secret, in departing from herself, has come to overshadow them with a double cloud. Again they think of nothing but Zaidee—and Zaidee is nowhere to be found.

After a long delay, Mr Edward Lancaster answers the letter of Mrs Vivian. Mrs Lancaster had a multitude of friends, writes Mr Edward—half the old ladies in the kingdom, he believes, were acquainted with his stepmother—but he cannot tell, upon his honour, what particular old lady this may be. He had seen little of Mrs Lancaster during the last year of her life; in fact, his wife and she did not pull well together,

and they had little or no intercourse. He is extremely sorry ; but the fact is, he has not the remotest idea who the old lady can be whom they are looking for. In his postscript, however, Mr Edward kindly adds a list of old ladies—a few names with addresses, but most without—which he heads, “ Some of Mrs Lancaster’s friends.” It is just possible—it may be one of these.

As these old ladies—all who have addresses—live in London, Percy must leave the Temple, and his most important and weighty studies, to seek them out,—a task which Percy sets about with exemplary earnestness. Some of the old ladies are interested—some a little affronted—many astonished : they cannot tell why *they* should be applied to, of all the people in the world. One of them thinks she has heard Mrs Lancaster speak of Miss Francis. Is not Miss Francis that interesting creature who was so sadly deformed ? Some accident in her youth, the old lady believes—she who wore spectacles and worked cross-stitch like an angel ? No ?—then the old lady knows no other Miss Francis, and is quite convinced that Mrs Lancaster knew no one whom she herself did not also know. Another is persuaded that the lady who went abroad must be Mrs Cleaver, who settled in Florence. A young lady went with her, a pretty fair young creature — she married Antony Cleaver six months

ago, and came home, and was very well settled indeed. Can that be the young lady? Percy Vivian, his face flushing with the pride of descent, says No, abruptly —it could not be Zaidee,—Zaidee was dark, and only fourteen years old, and would never marry an Antony Cleaver; whereupon the old lady makes him a curtsey, and says she cannot pretend to know.

Altogether it is a most unsuccessful business from first to last; and the little party who have been abroad are, each of them, persuaded that they have been in personal contact with the object of their search, and yet passed her by. Mrs Vivian is certain that some one brushed past her in the very courtyard of the Hotel de Suède, with the flying step of Zaidee. Elizabeth is haunted with a vision of one slight figure standing apart at that midnight examination of baggage and passports on the French frontier. Percy is confident she was one of that English party with those ugly blue shades on, who looked up at them from a very little obscure roadside station as they dashed by on the road to Calais; and Captain Bernard knows he saw her with some children and a *bonne* in the gardens of the Tuileries. When he followed them, the girl disappeared. "It was impossible to find her again," says Captain Bernard. And as they sit in the drawing-room of the Grange, Sophy, who is something matter-of-fact, wipes the tears from her cheeks,

and asks, “ Could they all be Zaidee ? Could she be in so many different places ? Are you sure it was our Zay, mamma ? ” At which name Sophy is once more overpowered, and weeps again. Angelina might have kept her secret to herself, for all the good it has done ; and now that there is leisure to think of her, all these ladies fall upon Angelina with the bitterest contempt. “ And *she* has a baby ! ” says Mrs Vivian. You would fancy Mrs Vivian thought it some grand mistake in Providence, by the tone in which she speaks ; and they are all extremely compassionate of poor Mr Green. The sympathy into which Angelina deluded them for her imaginary “ decline,” comes in now to swell their wrath ; and the young Curate of Briarfard, who is one of the fireside party, cannot but conclude this Vicaress of Newton Magna to be by no means a creditable representative of the Church Establishment, for the honour of which this very young gentleman is jealous above measure. And it is very well for Mrs Green that she is no longer solicitous about the favour of the Grange. The lady of the Manor could have inflicted a due and satisfactory punishment upon the curate’s wife of her own parish, but it is not easy to reach the snug retirement of Newton Magna, where Angelina dresses her baby in extraordinary frocks of her own making, and the reverend John smiles upon her with unfailing indulgence, and thinks the said frocks

astonishing works of art. It is a small consolation to be indignant—a very small consolation to express one's opinion of Mrs Green, however terse and pithy the terms of this opinion may be ; and the family heart, awakened from its resignation, longs for Zaidee, and will not be comforted concerning its lost child. In those winter nights they seem to hear footsteps climbing the hilly pathway through the storm and wind ;—they seem to hear some wandering irresolute stranger coming and going about the doors and windows, as if afraid, and yet anxious to seek admittance ; but when they hurry out on a hundred messages of search, there is no Zaidee—there is nothing but the falling leaves swept up in gusts, and rustling as they fly past like a flight of winter birds. Her life in Mrs Disbrowe's is the constant theme of conversation among them, and they are all familiar with the drab-coloured drawing-room—with Mrs Disbrowe's pink ribbons and comely face. Zaidee has met with friends at least—that is a consolation. She has not been harshly treated by the world, nor cast abroad altogether out of its homes. Safe and honourable shelter is a great thing to be certain of, and this she has had from the very day of her departure. If they had but known then !—if they could but have found her !—and Mrs Vivian, and Margaret, and Sophy, end their fireside conversation with again a notice of Angelina,

very true if not very flattering : for, “fools are never harmless,” says Mrs Vivian bitterly. And when they go to rest, it is still with many thoughts of Zaidee, doubts and fears, and speculations of restless uncertainty ; for all their inquiries have come to no result : the lost is more entirely lost than ever, and the hearts of her friends are sick with this second failing of all their hopes.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FAMILY FORTUNES.

THE family circle of the Grange is grievously broken now. Instead of the young Squire and his projected improvements, those works which were to quicken the blood in the rural veins of Briarfard, to stimulate the whole county, and double the rental of the estate, Mrs Vivian governs these small domains, as Squire Percy's wife might be expected to govern them—though not without a trace that Squire Philip's mother is also here, not disposed to reject with utter prejudice the innovations sanctioned by her absent boy. The estate goes on very well under her careful superintendence ; and now and then, with a flash of feminine daring, from which she retreats hastily in feminine cowardice, Mrs Vivian dashes at a morsel of improvement too, and has it done before she has time to repent. There is no large young family now, uncontrolled, and without any necessity for controlling themselves, to make

the Grange an expensive household ; there are more rooms shut up in the family dwelling-place than it is pleasant to reckon, and a great many expenses curtailed ; for the family of the Grange consists only of Margaret and Sophy, who find it very hard not to be dreary in that great drawing-room, once so well tenanted. The young ladies' room, once the brightest corner of the house, is dull now, with its fireless hearth, and with its sweet presiding genius gone ; the library, cold and vacant, cries aloud for Philip ; the house echoes only to those dull sounds which are lightened no longer by Percy's voice of frolic and youthful impetuous footstep ; and Zaidee, whom Sermo seeks continually as he stalks about through the hall, and up and down the great staircase, accosting every one with his wistful eyes—Zaidee, whose voice was heard but seldom in the household, is the most sadly missed of all. The servants even pine for the old life, and tell each other how dull it is now in the Grange.

And Margaret Vivian watches at those far-seeing windows, no longer looking for the approach of any one, but, with a sad indefinite wistfulness, tracing those solitary roads as they disappear far away into the stormy heaven—watching those great masses of cloud swept hither and thither before the wind, the

light leaves that rustle through the air in swarms, and that stouter foliage which stiffens on the dwarf oaks in every hedgerow. No, it is not the Rector of Woodchurch with whom Margaret's thoughts are busy. They are not busy with anything ; they are drooping with the meditative sadness which marks, like a mental dress of mourning, where the heartbreak has been, and how it wears away. She is much too young, too fresh and human-hearted, to flatter Mr Powis's vanity by inconsolable disappointment. She is consoled, but she is sad. An imaginative and thoughtful melancholy wraps heaven and earth for Margaret Vivian. She has found out the discord in our mortal music—the jar among all its harmonies ; and though she does not favour poetry which treats of blights and desolations, and is rather less than more sentimental, Margaret, whose young life has come to its first pause, does make a pause at it, and stays to consider. It is already well for her fanciful mind that this curb has come, and by-and-by it will be better ; so she stands at the window in the twilight, and no one reproves her ; the discipline of Providence is working its own way.

And Margaret works very hard at her landscapes, and makes portraits of Briarford ; also, having note of a new school of painting, begins to study a bit of

greensward so closely that you can count its blades, and puts in every leaf upon her dwarfed and knotted oaks. There is a morsel of ground ivy in one of her sketches, which you would say must have been studied with a microscope, or painted by some fairy whose eyes were nearer to it than the eyes of common mortals are wont to be. But in spite of this, Margaret cannot get over Zaidee's criticism. It is quite impossible to tell what sort of a day it is from that placid canvass. It is Briarfard, but it is not nature ; and Margaret is as far as ever from knowing how people contrive to paint those invisible realities—the air and wind.

Sophy, in the meanwhile, is busy with her own avocations. Sophy is greater than ever in Briarfard school—a contriver of holidays and manager of feasts. Mrs Wyburgh, who is always glad to share her afternoon cup of coffee with her young visitor, admires the activity which she is not able to emulate, and, with her rich Irish voice, calls Sophy “honey,” and declares she must be a clergyman’s wife. The young Curate of Briarfard, who is a Rev. Reginald Burlington, as old of blood and pure of race as Mr Powis himself, was somewhat inclined to extreme High Churchism when he came to succeed Mr Green, and had conscientious doubts on the subject of clergymen’s wives. But the

young gentleman has seen cause to alter his sentiments singularly within the last few months. Nobody is known to have argued the question with him, yet his views are much ameliorated, and he too strongly coincides with Mrs Wyburgh as to the special vocation of Sophy Vivian. But the Rev. Reginald has no prospects to speak of, and Miss Sophy is not known to admire love in a cottage ; so the young curate makes the best of his time by perpetual visits, and establishes himself, as a necessity, at the fireside of the Grange, where Sophy, in spite of herself, begins to look for him, and to wonder if any chance keeps him away ; and thus the youthful churchman bides his time.

And Percy is in the Temple, a law student, burning his midnight oil not unfrequently, but seldom over the mystic authorities of his profession. Percy knows an editor, and writes verses. Percy, once extremely economical, begins to unbend a little in his severity, and intends to make a brilliant *début* as an author. The youngest son is full of life, of spirit, of frolic, and affectionateness when he goes home. It is as if some one from another sphere had lighted among them, when Percy makes a flying visit to the Grange. Mrs Vivian says it is a certain thing that he cannot be an idle student, for he is never happy without occupation ;

for this good mother does not know what a restless, brilliant, busy mode of idleness her son is proficient in. They wonder at his hosts of friends ; they wonder at his bright and happy animation, and the fulness of his undaunted hope. Yes, though Percy Vivian is a whole year older—though he has actually begun life—though he has known a great family reverse, and will have but a small portion of worldly goods falling to his share—Percy, still undismayed, spurns at the subject world in his proud, young, triumphant vigour, and knows no difficulty which was not made to be conquered.

And Philip is in India. The young Squire is no ascetic either ; he has his pleasures, as they find, by these manly open-hearted letters of his. He tells them of his Indian Prince with a merry humour, and laughs at the habits of luxury he is acquiring, and threatens to come home a nabob ; and even while he prays them to send out a Cheshire gale, or one fresh day of the climate of Briarfard, the young man in his honourable labours enjoys his life. He is working to make an independence for himself. Philip, the head of the house, will not consent to have the Grange. If Zaidee is lost, his mother and sisters may remain in it, and its revenues accumulate, says the brave young man ; but Percy and he have their own way to make,

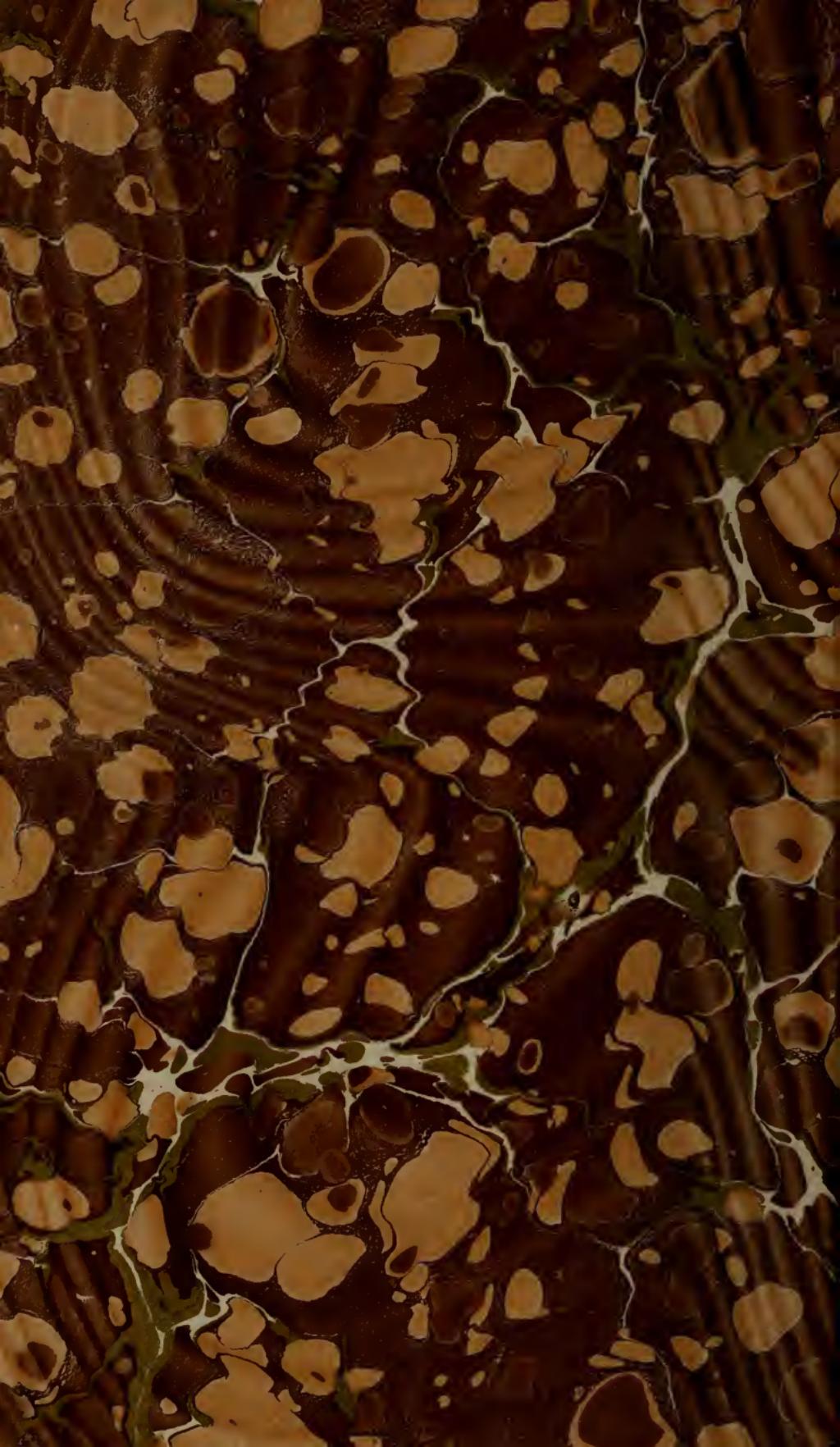
and must establish themselves. When he says this, Philip sends part of his first year's allowance to Percy, to enable him to prosecute his studies ; and Percy sends out to him a batch of magazines, with poems in them, in return.

Elizabeth is in Morton Hall, a beautiful young matron, doing all her duties with the simplicity which gives an almost royal dignity to her beauty, and Captain Bernard's dark face glows with the sober certainty of his great happiness. The Grange looks thankfully, but sadly, on its distant sons and its transplanted daughter. Life is brighter for those who have gone away than for those who remain. Nobody thinks of Zaidee, nor of the other losses of the family, as they do who are left at home ; and those women, who are sometimes cast down in their wrestle, look abroad with wistfulness, and would almost envy, if they were not grateful for the lighter burden of the others. Their affection knows where to find Philip and Percy and Elizabeth—to rejoice and give thanks for their young abundant lives ; but where is Zaidee, the lost child ?

Zaidee is in her new home, growing as few have ever expected to see her grow—a pleasant life rising before her, a loving companion, friends who care for her. Zaidee's mind is alive and awake : she has

thrown off her burden. If she longs for home, she is no longer desolate, and life rises before this voluntary exile fresh and fair as life should ever rise ; for Hope has taken her hand again ; she has far outgrown the pool of Briarfard, and Zaidee's thoughts travel forth undaunted. There is no possibility so glad or so lofty but she is ready to accept it now.

END OF VOL. II.





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